

KENTUCKY'S ALL STARS VALIDATION STUDY

Interim Findings

***Report for the Early Childhood Advisory Council
September 2018***



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Contents

Introduction	6
Background of the Kentucky All STARS TQRIS	6
Kentucky All STARS Hybrid System	7
Overview of Methodology	8
Description of the Samples	8
Findings	10
Part 1: Does All STARS capture concepts and indicators of quality that resonate with stakeholders? ..	10
1a. To what extent do Kentucky All STARS stakeholders agree that All STARS contains concepts and criteria that are indicative of high quality early education?	10
Summary	25
Part 2: To what extent are child care/early education sites of different types, locations, etc. engaging in All STARS?	26
2a. To what extent do child care/early education sites vary in their progress through All STARS? ...	26
2b. To what extent does capacity to make progress through All STARS vary by child care/early education site type, location, etc.?	28
Summary	52
Part 3: Do All STARS' criteria, measurement, and rating procedures adequately and accurately differentiate child care or early education quality?	54
3a. How accurately and effectively do Kentucky All STARS levels differentiate the quality of programs?	54
Supports for Family Engagement.....	57
Summary	60
Part 4: Is there sufficient infrastructure to promote and support child care professionals and early education in their advance through All STARS?	61
4a. How effectively does Kentucky All STARS encourage advancement upward in the TQRIS through the non-monetary and monetary supports provided?	61
Serving Vulnerable Populations	64
Findings from Universal Survey of Early Childhood Professionals.....	64
SpeciaLink Early Childhood Inclusion Quality Scale	68
Summary	69
Conclusions and Recommendations	71
Appendix A: All STARS Criteria	73
Appendix B	76

List of Tables

Table 1	Administrator feedback on standards related to Classroom and Instruction Quality	12
Table 2	Administrator feedback on standards related to Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	15
Table 3	Administrator feedback on standards related to Family and Community Engagement	16
Table 4	Administrator feedback on standards related to Administrative and Leadership Practices.....	18
Table 5	Administrator feedback on the importance of All STARS standards for different purposes	19
Table 6	Parent feedback on use of All STARS rating to make enrollment decisions.....	20
Table 7	Parent feedback on factors that are indicative of or important for quality.....	22
Table 8	Stakeholder feedback on the factors that are critical for ensuring positive outcomes for children and families.....	24
Table 9	Differences Among the Operational Models	26
Table 10	Administrator Understanding of All STARS	29
Table 11	Administrator Satisfaction with All STARS	30
Table 12	Administrator Intentions to Improve Star Rating	30
Table 13	Administrator Feedback on Knowing their Technical Assistance Contacts	36
Table 14	Administrator Feedback on Supports for Improving Quality	37
Table 15	Preferred Methods for Receiving Support.....	40
Table 16	Availability of Different Types of Support.....	40
Table 17	Barriers to Receiving Support: Non-Cost Barriers (495 total responses).....	41
Table 18	Barriers to Receiving Support: Cost Factors.....	41
Table 19	Kentucky's Career Lattice.....	44
Table 20	Educational Achievement of Administrators and Teachers at Participating Study Sites	45
Table 21	Teacher Feedback on Course Enrollment and Scholarships	46
Table 22	Top Cost Factors that Impact Quality	47
Table 23	Administrator Feedback on Readiness to Meet Classroom and Instruction Quality Standards	49
Table 24	Administrator Feedback on Readiness to Meet Staff Qualifications and Professional Development Standards.....	50
Table 25	Administrator Feedback on Readiness to Meet Family and Community Engagement Standards	51
Table 26	Administrator Feedback on Readiness to Meet Administrative and Leadership Practices Standards	52
Table 27	Overall ECERS-R Scores in Observed Classrooms, by Star Rating	55
Table 28	Overall ECERS-3 Ratings in Observed Classrooms, by Star Rating	55
Table 29	Overall ITERS-R Ratings in Observed Classrooms, by Star Rating	56
Table 30	Overall SACERS Ratings in Observed Classrooms, by Star Rating	56
Table 31	FPTRQ Scale Scores for Directors in Participating Sites	58
Table 32	FPTRQ Scale Scores for Teachers in Participating Sites	59
Table 33	FPTRQ Scale Scores for Parents in Participating Sites.....	59
Table 34	Administrator Feedback on the Value of Financial and Other Incentives	61
Table 35	Administrator Feedback on Challenges for Improving Quality	62
Table 36	Teacher Feedback on Challenges for Improving Quality	63
Table 37	Universal Survey Respondent Feedback on Serving Children with High ACES	65
Table 38	Universal Survey Respondent Feedback on Training Specific to ACES	65
Table 39	Universal Survey Respondent Feedback on Absence of Training or Development for ACES	66
Table 40	Universal Survey Respondent Feedback on Skills and Tools.....	66
Table 41	Universal Survey Respondent Feedback on Strategies for Working with Children with High ACES	67
Table 42	Universal Survey Respondent Feedback on Occasionally or Sometimes Feeling Fatigue or Enthusiasm	68

Table 43	Overall SpecialLink Ratings for Participating Sites, by Star Rating	69
Table 44	Overall SpecialLink Ratings for Participating Sites, by Operational Model.....	69
Table 45	Population of Early Childhood Sites by Star Rating and Congressional District	76

Introduction

Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (TQRIS) are large-scale initiatives designed to encourage improving the quality of state or local early care and education (ECE) programs. Currently, quality initiatives are implemented in 44 states and districts, with some states, such as California and Florida, operating at county or local levels (The Build Initiative & Child Trends, 2017). While there are differences in the system designs across states, they invariably incorporate **specific standards of program quality**, a **process for measuring and rating quality**, **supports** (including financial incentives) for improving program quality, and **education and outreach about quality care** to families (Tout et al., 2017). This report contains findings from a recent validation study of Kentucky's new TQRIS: All STARS. The study was designed to:

- 1) Examine stakeholders' perceptions of whether the system sufficiently captures the concepts and indicators of quality,
- 2) Review the evidence for the quality indicators included in the system,
- 3) Determine the extent to which quality ratings are associated with measures of observed quality,
- 4) Assess how well the measurement and rating processes differentiate the levels of quality within and across the All STARS domains as well as various early care and education settings.
- 5) Investigate the degree to which the initiatives' infrastructure promotes and supports the advancement of child care professionals and early educators through the levels of quality.

Background of the Kentucky All STARS TQRIS

Kentucky's statewide TQRIS to address early care and education was established in 2000 utilizing funds from the KIDS (Kentucky Invests in Developing Success) NOW initiative, which focuses on the overall healthy development of young children. STARS for KIDS NOW became fully operational in 2002 as a completely voluntary system and consisted of four quality levels based on a block rating structure, with specific standards required at each level. Programs could apply to participate at a specific star level but were required to meet the standards for the level requested. Following submission of the application, a ratings visit was completed that included a review of documents and administration of the appropriate Environment Rating Scale (ERS).

Ratings of quality under STARS for KIDS NOW for child care centers, public preschools, and Head Start programs were based on various indicators falling within five categories: 1) ratios, 2) curriculum, 3) training, 4) regulatory compliance, and 5) personnel. Ratings for family child care programs included similar categories, with personnel being subsumed under a category of business practices. Once a star rating was awarded, sites were eligible for a cash achievement award based on the size of their program and the star level achieved.

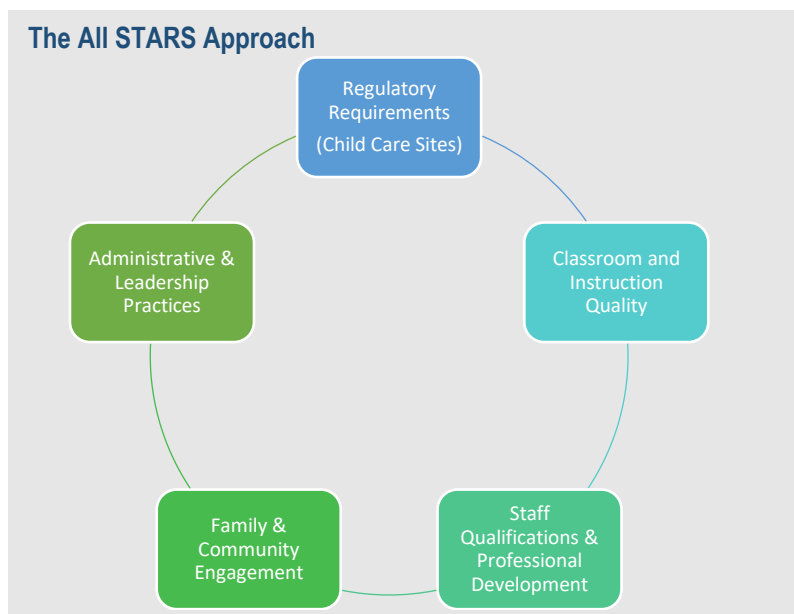
In 2011, validation and evaluation studies were conducted, with the results used to inform a redesign of STARS for KIDS NOW. Following a pilot of the modified system in 2015 and final refinements,

with significant resources from Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), Kentucky All STARS was launched in 2016. Sites participating in STARS for KIDS NOW then migrated to the revised TQRIS.

Kentucky All STARS is a mandatory system requiring participation at Level 1 by all programs receiving public funds, with advancement to higher quality levels being voluntary. During migration from STARS for KIDS NOW, licensed child care programs entered Kentucky All STARS at level 1 and preschools and Head Start programs entered at level 3.

Kentucky All STARS Hybrid System

Across states, three different types of rating structures are used to assign quality rating levels to programs. These structures are based on points, blocks, or a hybrid using both points and blocks. Kentucky All STARS utilizes a hybrid five-star rating scale, which includes domains (i.e., “blocks”) as well as standards with point-values assigned. Four domains make up the Kentucky All STARS ratings blocks: 1) Family and Community Engagement, 2) Classroom and Instructional Quality, 3) Staff Qualifications and Professional Development, and 4) Administrative and Leadership Practices.



A more detailed description of the requirements to achieve each level in the Kentucky All STARS system is attached in Appendix A. Briefly,

- To obtain a 1-star rating, programs must meet regulatory requirements.
- To obtain a 2-star rating, programs must complete the required standards in two domains: *Classroom and Instructional Quality* and *Staff Qualifications and Professional Development*.
- To advance to STARS levels 3 through 5, programs must
 - 1) Meet level 2 requirements,
 - 2) Participate in an environmental observation (the minimum score required increases at each level),
 - 3) Earn the minimum number of points assigned within each of the four domains, and
 - 4) Earn an additional range of points from their choice of the four domain(s) (the range of points increase at each level).

Overview of Methodology

The validation study of Kentucky All STARS incorporated a mixed-methods design, combining both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis techniques. In general, the study:

- Created a stratified random sample of early care and education sites participating in Kentucky All STARS. The sample included child care centers and homes, public preschools, and Head Start programs. A total of 314 sites and 955 classrooms were observed by qualified raters;
- Completed a literature review of TQRIS validation studies and research related to Kentucky All STARS quality domains and standards; and
- Conducted classroom assessments at each sampled site, including assessments of:
 - Quality of the care and early education environment;
 - The quality of “inclusion” care in classrooms serving children with special or developmental needs;
 - Family and provider (or teacher) relationship quality.

Methods

- Sample of child care, public preschool, and Head Start sites from across the state received onsite assessments and completed surveys
- Parents at participating sites completed surveys
- Stakeholders participated in interviews
- Early educators statewide were invited to participate in online surveys

Description of the Samples

Early Childhood Sites

Data supplied by the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood, the Department of Child Care, and Kentucky’s Department of Education were used to create a stratified random sample of sites for the study. A multi-stage sampling design was employed to select a proportion sample of over 300 sites. To select the samples, sites first were divided into data sets by type: preschool, Head Start, and child care. Next, these data sets were stratified by location within the service area of one of the five Early Childhood Regional Training Centers. Finally, sites within each region were divided into six quality rating categories (i.e., 1-5 stars and missing star rating). Simple random selection then was used within each region and category to select a total sample of 959 sites for recruitment, with an ultimate goal of including 318 sites in the study—55 preschool, 44 Head Start, and 219 child care sites¹. Once sampling was completed, confidential site ID numbers were assigned to each site in the sample. These ID numbers were used on all documents and communications in order to maintain confidentiality of sites agreeing to participate in the study.

¹ Following a 5-month period of recruitment, the initial sample of child care sites had been exhausted but 78 sites were still needed. An analysis of sample response and participation rate indicated no systematic differences between those in the original sample and those that were not sampled from the population. A second sample of 561 child care sites was selected for recruitment following the same procedures used for the initial sample.

Classrooms

The number of individual classrooms observed in participating sites was determined as follows:

- *Preschools*: Up to two classrooms per site as well as one classroom identified as Head Start, blended Head Start, and/or Early Head Start, if any.
- *Head Start programs*: Up to four classrooms per site.
- *Child care*: Up to five classrooms per site including up to two classrooms for each age group; one after-school or school-age classroom, if any; and at least one classroom identified as Head Start, blended Head Start, and/or Early Head Start, if any. Family child care sites served as a single classroom.

Upon receipt of a signed consent form, sites were asked to provide a list of all of the classrooms at the location. Using the list, the study team implemented a simple random selection procedure to determine which classrooms would be observed and assigned confidential classroom ID numbers to each classroom selected. Head Start, blended Head Start, and/or Early Head Start classrooms located in preschool and child care sites were automatically included for observation, with random selection of other classrooms used to reach the maximum number of classrooms possible per site type.

Findings

This section contains interim findings, using data available from 227 child care, preschool, and Head Start sites². Findings are presented by major question, with the following questions addressed:

- 1) Does All STARS capture concepts and indicators of quality that resonate with stakeholders (Part 1)?
- 2) To what extent are child care/early education sites of different types, locations, etc. engaging in All STARS (Part 2)?
- 3) Do All STARS' criteria, measurement, and rating procedures adequately and accurately differentiate child care or early education quality (Part 3)?
- 4) Is there sufficient infrastructure to promote and support child care professionals and early education in their advance through All STARS (Part 4)?

Part 1: Does All STARS capture concepts and indicators of quality that resonate with stakeholders?

1a. To what extent do Kentucky All STARS stakeholders agree that All STARS contains concepts and criteria that are indicative of high quality early education?

The study team conducted a number of exercises to confirm that All STARS domains and standards were consistent with Kentucky stakeholder's beliefs about quality. In addition to interviews with KY stakeholders, the team collected survey data from administrators, teachers, and parents. This section contains aggregate findings from these data collections³.

Findings from Validation Study Participants

Each administrator from participating validation study sites completed a Site Questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire asked for administrator feedback on the importance of existing All STARS standards for determining quality. Findings are presented below, by the four All STARS domains.

² As of September 4 2018, final and verified data were available for 227 sites with remaining data in the process of completion, coding, and entry.

Classroom and Instruction Quality

The domain “Classroom and Instruction Quality” contains standards related to classroom practices. As can be seen in

Classroom and Instruction Quality

- Overall (as either required or optional standards), participating administrators provided the greatest support for the standard “*Staff conduct ongoing curriculum-based assessment to inform instruction.*”
- Overall, participating administrators provided the least support for the standard “*Site has National Accreditation that is acknowledged by state approved organization.*”
- The following three standards received the greatest support, to date, as **required** standards:
 - *Staff support IFSP/IEP goals of individual children,*
 - *Site implements a curriculum that aligns with Kentucky Early Learning Standards (KYELS), and*
 - *Staff conduct ongoing curriculum-based assessment to inform instruction.*

Table 1, below, there is relatively high support from participating administrators for each of the standards⁴. The standard with the least relative amount of support was *“Site has National Accreditation that is acknowledged by state approved organization”*—this standard received support from 72% of respondents. It also is worth noting that the standard *“Staff conduct ongoing curriculum-based assessment to inform instruction”* received universal support.

⁴ The standards reflect actions completed by sites to improve quality and advance in star rating. Participation in an observation completed by the state (i.e., the Environment Rating Scale) is a required standard for levels 3 and above. Similarly, licensing regulations are compulsory for child care sites to achieve a level 1 rating and to operate within the state.

Table 1 also distinguishes between items that respondents believed should be required, versus those respondents believed should be optional. Standards that received the highest support as “required” All STARS elements included:

- Staff support IFSP/IEP goals of individual children,
- Site implements a curriculum that aligns with Kentucky Early Learning Standards (KYELS), and
- Staff conduct ongoing curriculum-based assessment to inform instruction.

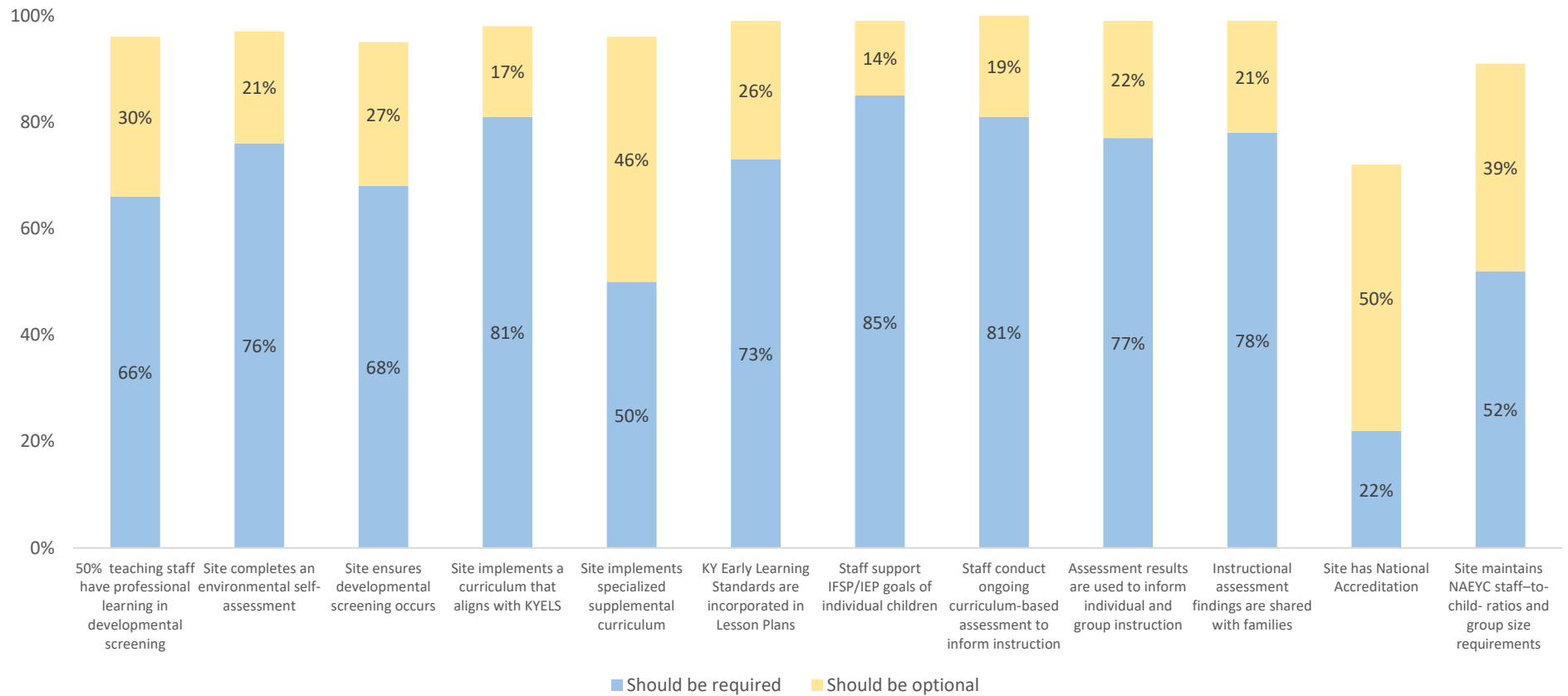
Standards with the lowest support as “required” elements included:

- Site has National Accreditation that is acknowledged by state approved organization,
- Site implements specialized supplemental curriculum, and
- Site maintains NAEYC staff-to-child- ratios and group size requirements.

Table 1 Administrator feedback on standards related to Classroom and Instruction Quality

	Important for Quality		Overall Support
	<i>Should be required</i>	<i>Should be optional</i>	
a) 50% of teaching staff have professional learning activities in developmental screening	66% (148 of 223)	30% (68 of 223)	96%
b) Site completes an environmental self-assessment using a valid and reliable tool appropriate for the ages/settings of children served	76% (170 of 224)	21% (47 of 224)	97%
c) Site ensures developmental screening occurs within 90 days of enrollment and referral (if needed) within 30 days of screening for all enrolled children	68% (152 of 224)	27% (61 of 224)	95%
d) Site implements a curriculum that aligns with Kentucky Early Learning Standards (KYELS)	81% (181 of 223)	17% (38 of 223)	98%
e) Site implements specialized supplemental curriculum	50% (111 of 222)	46% (103 of 222)	96%
f) KY Early Learning Standards are incorporated in Lesson Plans	73% (162 of 223)	26% (57 of 223)	99%
g) Staff support IFSP/IEP goals of individual children	85% (188 of 222)	14% (30 of 222)	99%
h) Staff conduct ongoing curriculum-based assessment to inform instruction	81% (180 of 223)	19% (43 of 223)	100%
i) Assessment results are used to inform individual and group instruction	77% (171 of 223)	22% (49 of 223)	99%
j) Instructional assessment findings are shared with families	78% (173 of 222)	21% (47 of 222)	99%
k) Site has National Accreditation that is acknowledged by state approved organization	22% (48 of 223)	50% (112 of 223)	72%
l) Site maintains NAEYC staff-to-child- ratios and group size requirements	52% (116 of 223)	39% (88 of 223)	91%

Figure 1 Administrator feedback on standards related to Classroom and Instruction Quality



Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

The domain Staff Qualifications and Professional Development contain standards related to administrator and teacher professional learning and credentialing. As shown in *Table 2*, there was general support for all standards. Standards that received the highest support as “required” All STARS elements included:

- 50% of teaching staff receive 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree,
- Program/Site Administrator/Director receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree,
- 50% of teaching staff participate in professional learning activities related to curriculum-based assessment, and
- Program/Site Administrator achieves the Kentucky Director Credential OR holds an administrator certificate in a field not related to early childhood and the equivalent of 3 credit hours in child development or at least 5 years full-time related experience in early childhood field.

Classroom and Instruction Quality

- Overall (as either required or optional standards), participating administrators indicated the greatest support for the standard *“50% of teaching staff receive 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree.”*
- The following three standards received the greatest support, to date, as **required** standards:
 - *50% of teaching staff receive 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree,*
 - *Program/Site Administrator/Director receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree, and*
 - *50% of teaching staff participate in professional learning activities related to curriculum-based assessment.*

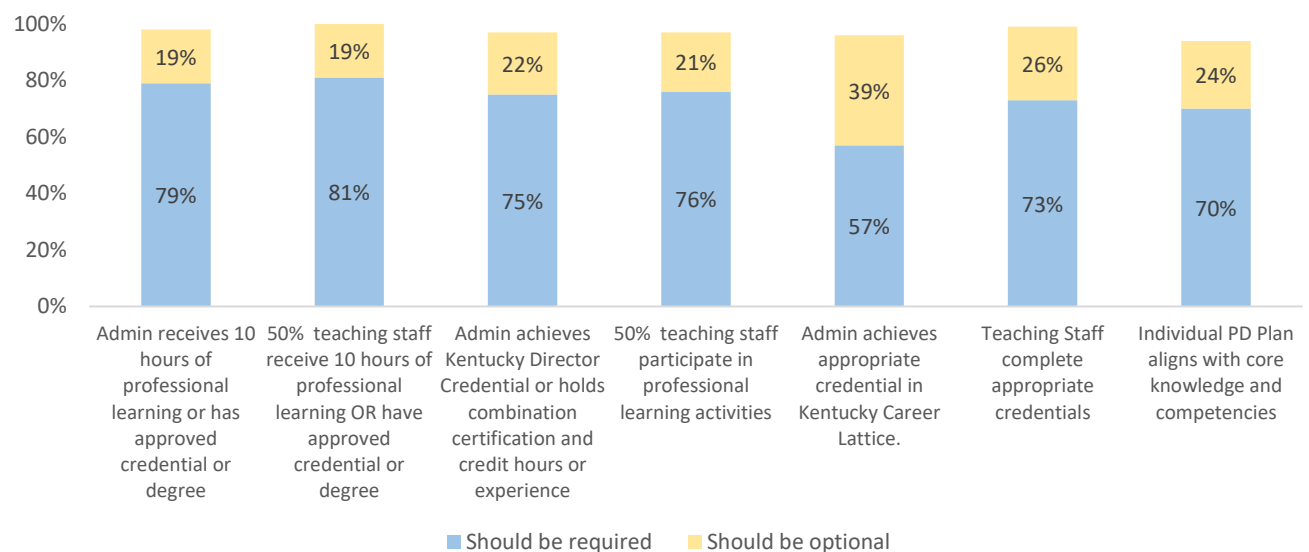
Standards with the lowest support as “required” elements included:

- Program/Site Administrator achieves appropriate credential as outlined in the Kentucky Career Lattice,
- Individual PD Plan aligns with state identified professional core knowledge and competencies, and
- Teaching Staff complete appropriate credentials.

Table 2 Administrator feedback on standards related to Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

	Important for Quality		Overall Support
	Should be required	Should be optional	
a) Program/Site Administrator/Director receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree	79% (176 of 223)	19% (43 of 223)	98%
b) 50% of teaching staff receive 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree	81% (180 of 223)	19% (42 of 223)	100%
c) Program/Site Administrator achieves the Kentucky Director Credential OR holds an administrator certificate in a field not related to early childhood and the equivalent of 3 credit hours in child development or at least 5 years full-time related experience in early childhood field	75% (167 of 223)	22% (49 of 223)	97%
d) 50% of teaching staff participate in professional learning activities related to curriculum-based assessment	76% (171 of 224)	21% (46 of 224)	97%
e) Program/Site Administrator achieves appropriate credential as outlined in the Kentucky Career Lattice.	57% (126 of 222)	39% (86 of 222)	96%
f) Teaching Staff complete appropriate credentials	73% (163 of 224)	26% (58 of 224)	99%
g) Individual PD Plan aligns with state identified professional core knowledge and competencies	70% (157 of 223)	24% (54 of 223)	94%

Figure 2 Administrator feedback on standards related to Staff Qualifications and Professional Development



Family and Community Engagement

The domain Family and Community Engagement contain standards related to the modes and content of communicating and engaging with families and other community agencies. As shown in

Table 3, there was general support for all standards. Standards that received the highest support as “required” All STARS elements included:

- Two-way communication with families,
- Implements transition supports for children and families, and
- Implement family engagement activities that promote children’s development and learning.

Family and Community Engagement

- Overall (as either required or optional standards), participating administrators provided the greatest support for the standard “*Two-way communication with families.*”
- The following three standards received the greatest support, to date, as **required** standards:
 - *Two-way communication with families,*
 - *Implements transition supports for children and families, and*
 - *Implement family engagement activities that promote children’s development and learning.*

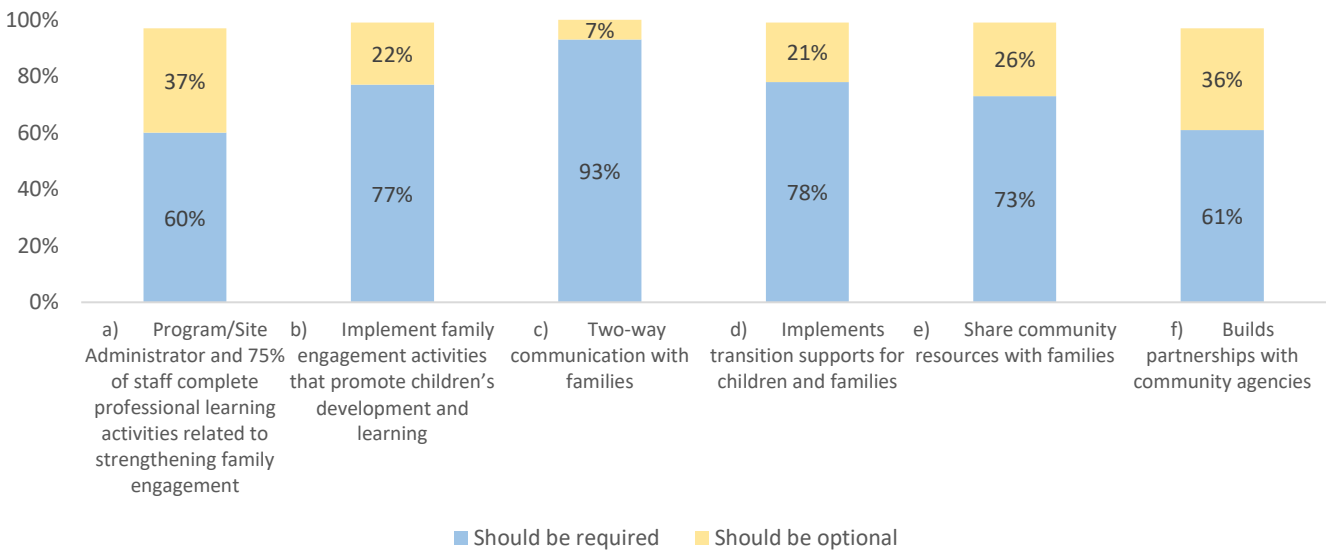
Standards with the lowest support as “required” elements included:

- Program/Site Administrator and 75% of staff complete professional learning activities related to strengthening family engagement,
- Builds partnerships with community agencies, and
- Share community resources with families.

Table 3 Administrator feedback on standards related to Family and Community Engagement

	Important for Quality		Overall Support
	<i>Should be required</i>	<i>Should be optional</i>	
a) Program/Site Administrator and 75% of staff complete professional learning activities related to strengthening family engagement	60% (134 of 223)	37% (83 of 223)	97%
b) Implement family engagement activities that promote children’s development and learning	77% (172 of 223)	22% (48 of 223)	99%
c) Two-way communication with families	93% (207 of 223)	7% (16 of 223)	100%
d) Implements transition supports for children and families	78% (175 of 223)	21% (47 of 223)	99%
e) Share community resources with families	73% (162 of 223)	26% (59 of 223)	99%
f) Builds partnerships with community agencies	61% (135 of 223)	36% (81 of 223)	97%

Figure 3 Administrator feedback on standards related to Family and Community Engagement



Administrative and Leadership Practices

The domain Administrative and Leadership Practices contain standards related to processes for ongoing quality improvements at sites. As shown in

Table 4

Table 4 Administrator feedback on standards related to Administrative and Leadership Practices, there was general support for all standards. Standards that received the highest support as “required” All STARS elements included:

- Has a system for evaluating staff performance by monitoring and providing feedback for improvement,
- Seeks input from staff on the continuous improvement plan, and
- Implements a continuous improvement plan.

Administrative and Leadership Practices

- The following three standards received the greatest support, to date, as **required** standards:
 - *Has a system for evaluating staff performance by monitoring and providing feedback for improvement,*
 - *Seeks input from staff on the continuous improvement plan, and*
 - *Implements a continuous improvement plan.*

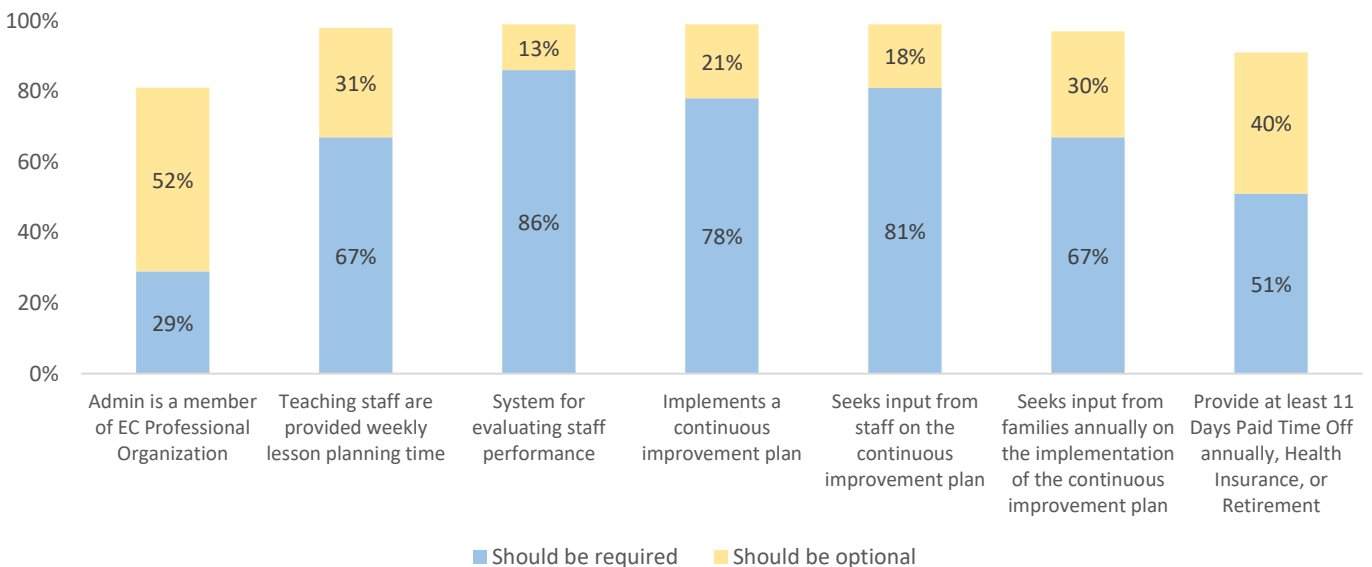
Standards with the lowest support as “required” elements included:

- Administrator/Director is a member of EC Professional Organization,
- Teaching staff are provided weekly lesson planning time, and
- Seeks input from families annually on the implementation of the continuous improvement plan.

Table 4 Administrator feedback on standards related to Administrative and Leadership Practices

	Important for Quality		
	<i>Should be required</i>	<i>Should be optional</i>	Overall Support
a) Administrator/Director is a member of EC Professional Organization	29% (64 of 222)	52% (115 of 222)	81%
b) Teaching staff are provided weekly lesson planning time	67% (150 of 224)	31% (70 of 224)	98%
c) Has a system for evaluating staff performance by monitoring and providing feedback for improvement	86% (193 of 224)	13% (30 of 224)	99%
d) Implements a continuous improvement plan	78% (174 of 224)	21% (47 of 224)	99%
e) Seeks input from staff on the continuous improvement plan	81% (181 of 224)	18% (41 of 224)	99%
f) Seeks input from families annually on the implementation of the continuous improvement plan	67% (150 of 223)	30% (67 of 223)	97%
g) Provide at least 11 Days Paid Time Off annually, Health Insurance, or Retirement	51% (113 of 222)	40% (88 of 222)	91%

Figure 4 Administrator feedback on standards related to Administrative and Leadership Practices



All STARS Standards Overall

Finally, participating administrators were asked to consider the overall value of the standards for ensuring early education and learning sites promoted or supported (a) basic health, safety, and welfare of young children; (b) quality early childhood programming; (c) good administrative practices; (d) foundational elements for quality at early education and learning sites; and (e) child development and school readiness. Findings are presented in Table 5; the majority of administrators agreed or strongly agreed that All STARS was important for achieving these goals. Further, between two-thirds (68%) and 83% of respondents reported that All STARS “*can achieve its mission of assessing, improving, and communicating the level of quality in early care and education (and wrap around) services...*” with either some or all of its standards. In comparison, less than one-quarter (23%) reported that All STARS could achieve its mission without these standards of practice.

- More than 90% of respondents reported that All STARS standards are important for achieving systems goals related to quality early learning, child health and development, and school readiness.
- More than 80% of respondents reported that All STARS could achieve its mission by using all of its standards.

Table 5 Administrator feedback on the importance of All STARS standards for different purposes

	Percent who Agree or Strongly Agree
The Kentucky All STARS standards are important for ensuring that early education sites (including Kentucky child care, preschool, and Head Start) address the...	
Basic health, safety, and overall welfare of young children.	99% (221 of 224)
Quality of early childhood programming.	98% (219 of 224)
Proper administration or management of programs.	95% (213 of 224)
Need to have a foundation for quality established at every site.	98% (220 of 224)
Promotion of child development and school readiness.	98% (220 of 224)
Kentucky All STARS can achieve its mission of assessing, improving, and communicating the level of quality in early care and education (and wrap around) services...	
By including ALL of Standards of Practice in its criteria	83% (187 of 225)
By including SOME of Standards of Practice in its criteria	68% (150 of 219)
Without the Standards of Practice	23% (49 of 210)

Parent Survey Findings

The study team collected parent survey data from over 2500 parents at participating sites. Parents were asked to provide feedback on a number of concepts—including the factors that they believed were indicative of or important for quality. As shown in Table 6, almost 15% of parents reported using All STARS ratings in making a decision to enroll their child at a specific site, suggesting awareness of the All STARS system. Higher proportions of parents using private child care or Head Start agreed with this item than those enrolling in preschool programs⁵.

Further, there are ongoing efforts to improve the visibility of and knowledge about All STARS. A survey of community education materials and strategies, conducted in Fall 2017 and completed by more than 600 early education professionals across the state, suggested that professionals are most interested in outdoor signage (supported by 56% of respondents) and All STARS posters (supported by 50% of respondents). Over 70% of respondents reported an interest in receiving All STARS signage. Of these, more than 70% wanted signage to advertise their star rating and participation in All STARS.

Table 6 Parent feedback on use of All STARS rating to make enrollment decisions

Yes, used All STARS rating in making decision to enroll child			
Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
14%	16%	9%	14%
(342 of 2463)	(220 of 1366)	(54 of 606)	(68 of 490)

⁵ Entry into preschool or Head Start sites is based on eligibility; these programs target at risk children as defined by income or special needs status. The cost of care also may be a strong factor in a parent’s choice of care.

Table 7 presents parent feedback on what they believed was important for quality at early learning sites. As is shown, the items with the most support from parents included:

- I know my child will be safe here,
- The teachers use lots of different types of activities to promote child learning,
- The program ensures that children are in warm and nurturing classrooms,
- The teachers use lesson plans that work for the age of my child (or children), and
- The program is always trying to find ways to improve its quality,

Also important to parents were:

- The program reaches out to parents and find ways to send information home,
- The program staff have a lot of experience in early childhood education,
- I like the setting my child (or children) will be in, and whether they'll be in someone's home, in a preschool classroom, or a child care center,
- The location, and how easy or difficult it is for me to get there,
- The program likes hearing from parents and having parents visit on-site, and
- The cost, and whether or not I can afford it.

The items with the least support from parents included:

- The program hires teachers that have a four-year college degree, such as an Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education,
- The director or owner of the site has a two-year college degree, such as an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education,
- The program hires teachers that have a two-year college degree, such as an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education,
- The director or owner of the site has a four-year college degree, such as an Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education, and
- The program's All STARS star rating.

Parent Beliefs About Quality

- The following three items received the **greatest** support from parents, as indicators of quality:
 - *Safety,*
 - *Use of different types of activities to promote learning, and*
 - *Warm and nurturing classrooms.*
- The following three items received the **least** support from parents, as indicators of quality:
 - *The program hires teachers that have a four-year college degree, such as an Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education,*
 - *The director or owner of the site has a two-year college degree, such as an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education, and*
 - *The program hires teachers that have a two-year college degree, such as an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education.*

These responses suggest that parents are concerned with items that correspond to **nurturing, safety, variety and age-appropriateness of activities, experience of staff, and family communications**. It is noteworthy that parents are not [yet]

connecting these items to All STARS, which was designed to promote and support these types of factors. Thus, **one take-away from parent responses may be the need to conduct additional outreach and education related to indicators of quality and All STARS' design.**

Connecting Parent Beliefs about Quality to All STARS

- Parents are not yet connecting their desires for and beliefs about quality with All STARS, which is designed to promote and support the elements parents most often associate with quality.

Table 7 Parent feedback on factors that are indicative of or important for quality

		Agreement
Items with greatest support from parents	I know my child will be safe here.	95% (2406 of 2530)
	The teachers use lots of different types of activities to promote child learning.	90% (2277 of 2530)
	The program ensures that children are in warm and nurturing classrooms.	87% (2204 of 2530)
	The teachers use lesson plans that work for the age of my child (or children).	81% (2041 of 2530)
	The program is always trying to find ways to improve its quality.	81% (2049 of 2530)
	The program reaches out to parents and find ways to send information home.	76% (1932 of 2530)
	The program staff have a lot of experience in early childhood education.	76% (1935 of 2530)
	I like the setting my child (or children) will be in, and whether they'll be in someone's home, in a preschool classroom, or a child care center.	76% (1928 of 2530)
	The location, and how easy or difficult it is for me to get there.	74% (1875 of 2530)
	The program likes hearing from parents and having parents visit on-site.	72% (1823 of 2530)
	The cost, and whether or not I can afford it.	70% (1777 of 2530)
Items with moderate support from parents	The program creates special activities to help when children start at the site or move into a new classroom.	65% (1653 of 2530)
	The teachers regularly test my child for how well he or she is learning.	63% (1597 of 2530)
	The program takes care of the staff with different types of benefits.	61% (1536 of 2530)
	The program has learning activities and events for parents.	61% (1542 of 2530)

		Agreement
Items with least support from parents	The teachers follow the guidelines that Kentucky's state agencies have provided for creating and using lesson plans.	60% (1527 of 2530)
	The program asks for parent feedback when creating learning plans for their child.	60% (1528 of 2530)
	The teachers regularly go to trainings.	56% (1409 of 2530)
	I know the providers or teachers share my beliefs or values.	54% (1369 of 2530)
	The program's All STARS star rating.	39% (991 of 2530)
	The director or owner of the site has a four-year college degree, such as an Bachelor Degree in Early Childhood Education.	37% (947 of 2530)
	The program hires teachers that have a two-year college degree, such as an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education.	36% (905 of 2530)
	The director or owner of the site has a two-year college degree, such as an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education.	32% (813 of 2530)
	The program hires teachers that have a four-year college degree, such as an Bachelor Degree in Early Childhood Education.	30% (770 of 2530)

Findings from Universal Survey of Early Learning Professionals

*A survey of all early educators in the state received more than 650 responses; respondents included administrators as well as teachers and other staff at child care, preschool, and Head Start sites. One item on the survey asked respondents to indicate the top three initiatives or investments that are “critical” for ensuring positive outcomes for children and families. Of the response options presented on the survey, the greatest proportion of respondents (72%) reported that **high quality early education sites were critical for positive outcomes** (*

Table 8). This was followed by early intervention services for eligible children (which are supported with Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act resources). Lower levels of support were reported for items such as (1) an educated early childhood workforce; (2) financial supports for families; (3) health and nutrition services; (4) parenting education; or (5) other services for parents.

Table 8 Stakeholder feedback on the factors that are critical for ensuring positive outcomes for children and families

	Agreement
High quality early education in child care, preschool, and Head Start sites	72% (480 of 664)
Early intervention services for children with special learning or developmental needs	69% (460 of 664)
Educated early childhood workforce	38% (253 of 664)
Financial supports to meet a family’s basic needs, for all families in need	35% (233 of 664)
Health and nutrition services available to all families and children in need	34% (229 of 664)
Parenting education available to all parents who would like to participate	25% (165 of 664)
Parent workforce, education, and literacy services available to all parents who would like to participate	23% (152 of 664)

Findings from Interviews and Focus Groups

The study team conducted interviews and focus groups with representatives from state offices, including Kentucky’s Department of Education, Division of Child Care, and the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood, as well as coaches and staff working across the state. In one set of interviews, participants were asked their thoughts on the ability of All STARS to promote and support:

- Meaningful and improved quality at child care and early education sites?
- Improved child development and school readiness?
- A more stable and robust early childhood workforce?
- A coordinated and comprehensive early childhood system?

In a second set of interviews, participants were asked their thoughts on the extent to which All STARS “captures quality”. Highlights from their responses included:

- There is a need for ongoing outreach and monitoring, to ensure sites meet and implement practices, that are consistent with quality standards, on an ongoing basis. The current system is designed to use periodic observations and document reviews to affirm quality—but “every day quality” may require strategies and tools to help educators focus on classroom practices and implementation (such as onsite coaching, leadership development, etc.)
- The effort required to move from a 1-star to a 2-star may not be the same as the effort required to achieve a 3-star, or a 4-star or 5-star. This is to say, it may become progressively harder to achieve higher star ratings. This stated, the hybrid approach (as opposed to the block approach) facilitates upward movement in ratings.

- There is a need to continue to educate early education professionals, parents, and others about what All STARS is designed to do and how it works.
- All STARS is working to connect standards for quality with support services—namely, the trainings that are provided as well as onsite and offsite supports for professionals (such as through coaching and technical assistance). In this sense, All STARS standards are helping to focus the entire system on quality and supports for quality.
- As sites and early educators become comfortable with All STARS, a big focus will be connecting the language and intention of the standards to routine classroom practices that support kindergarten readiness.
- Ongoing professional development, training, and support are critical. This can include incentives for educators who want or need to advance their education as well as materials, information, and tiered reimbursements for sites.

Summary

- All STARS standards were created in 2015 after a careful process of review and pilot testing
- State stakeholders and early education professionals tend to agree that All STARS criteria reflect what is necessary to provide quality at sites.
- There is dissonance among some stakeholders, notably parents, in beliefs about or desires for quality and All STARS elements and criteria that are designed to promote and support quality. This suggests the need for education and outreach to the general population.
- Stakeholders agree on the importance of “every day quality.” This may have implications for system guidance, professional learning supports and monitoring, to ensure the constructs and elements that are most important for quality experiences are implemented on an everyday basis.

Part 2: To what extent are child care/early education sites of different types, locations, etc. engaging in All STARS?

2a. To what extent do child care/early education sites vary in their progress through All STARS?

A review of current participation requirements and ratings, provided by Kentucky’s Department of Education (KDE) and Division of Child Care (DCC), reveal a unified code of All STARS standards supported by procedures that are specific to each agency. These differences affect entry-level rating, with KDE sites entering All STARS at a 3-star rating and DCC sites entering at a 1-star rating.

As shown in *Table 9*, the three models (child care, Head Start and public preschool) have differences in standards and expectations (that are additional to All STARS) rating processes, monitoring, and staffing for outreach, coaching, and technical assistance. In addition, the three models have different requirements for the education and credentials of early educators.

Differences in operational approach and processes connected to the three operational models are important for understanding the “how” and “why” sites with different operational models are advancing through the 5-star rating system.

Table 9 Differences Among the Operational Models

All STARS			
Unified All STARS standards required for child care, public schools and Head Start. Cross agency collaboration and process governed by MOU.			
	Child Care DCC	Public Preschool KDE	Head Start
Vision or Goals for All STARS:	Quality Improvement	Acknowledging existing quality	Acknowledging existing quality
Standards:	All STARS; Child Care Licensing	All STARS; Kentucky Preschool Program Review (P2R)	All STARS, Federal Head Start Regulations. If blended, then follow the highest requirements of the blended sites.

All STARS

Unified All STARS standards required for child care, public schools and Head Start. Cross agency collaboration and process governed by MOU.

Rating:	<p>Initial entry: Programs enter at Level 1. Desk Audit and incentive. ERS required for levels 3-5.</p> <p>Rating: Every 3 years. Child Care Licensing is conducted annually.</p>	<p>Initial entry: Schools enter at level 3; Staff reviewed rubric/docs and ECERS-3 to engage schools in increasing beyond 3 stars.</p> <p>Annual: District conducts ECERS-3 on 1/3 of classrooms, update and submit Preschool Performance Report and Program Approval Form.</p> <p>3rd Year Mid-cycle: District completes All STARS Renewal. RTC reviews evidence and ECERS-3 scores.</p> <p>6th Year Full Review: District completes P2R and All STARS renewal. ECERS-3 completed by RTC for 30% of classrooms at each site. KDE review P2R and All STARS evidence.</p>	<p>Initial Entry: Programs enter at 3 stars. All programs are monitored by Child Care if licensed or through P2R in non- licensed or blended with preschool</p>
Monitoring:	<p>Annual: Annual Quality Review; Child Care Licensing visits centers each year for licensing renewal</p>	<p>District conducts ECERS-3 every year. KDE and RTCs processes submitted documentation.</p>	<p>Licensed HS sites are monitored in the same manner as all child care sites. HS programs that are blended with preschool or are NOT licensed are monitored by preschool. HS programs also participate in all Federal Monitoring</p>
Staffing:	<p>Rating: Eastern Kentucky University and Division of Child Care;</p> <p>PD/TA: University of Kentucky through Child Care Aware;</p> <p>Licensing: Div. of Regulated Child Care</p>	<p>Rating: KDE (assisted by RTCs) reviews evidence and documentation, conducts site visits when needed; RTCs conduct ECERS-3 visits, Districts conduct ECERS-3 annually and report scores to RTCs.</p> <p>Monitoring: RTC reviews 3 year mid-cycle evidence and annual ECERS-3 scores. KDE reviews annual documentation and all 6th year Full Monitoring also conducts site visits as necessary.</p> <p>PD/TA: RTCs and Districts provide PD.</p>	<p>Rating: Licensed HS sites are rated in the same manner as all child care sites. HS programs that are blended with preschool or are NOT licensed are rated in the same manner as preschool. Monitoring: HS programs participate in all Federal and state required monitoring with blended programs.</p> <p>PD/TA: HS programs and Federal HS provides PD/TA to HS grantees. HS sites also participate in PD/TA through the blended program models</p>

All STARS			
Unified All STARS standards required for child care, public schools and Head Start. Cross agency collaboration and process governed by MOU.			
Technical Assistance or Coaching:	CCRR (University of Kentucky, or UK): Quality Coaches and Health and Safety Coaches.	RTC based on KDE priorities, observations, monitoring and by request.	
		Districts offer required and district specific trainings.	
		Teachers are required to have professional learning plans and 24 hrs. of PD. Teacher assistants are required to have 18 hrs. PL.	
Professional Development	CCRR (UK): PD Coaches, trainings. Teacher scholarships (Tobacco \$).	RTC offers trainings and develops trainings by request. Districts offer required trainings. Teachers must have 24 hrs. of PD.	HS receives money within their grant to attend necessary PD as needed. HS, CC and school districts often share PD opportunities.
Financing/Incentives	Initial achievement award; Annual quality award; Tiered incentive per subsidy reimbursement. Non-monetary grants (curricula, etc.).	No incentives tied to All STARS.	HS programs that are licensed have the ability to receive incentive dollars through licensed child care. Those HS programs that are blended with public preschool are not eligible for incentives.
		Districts/sites must use preschool allocations and district general funds to ensure quality.	

2b. To what extent does capacity to make progress through All STARS vary by child care/early education site type, location, etc.?

The ability to make progress in All STARS is contingent upon several factors, including (but not limited to):

1. Desire to advance in rating,
2. Ability to implement structural and administrative improvements in quality,
3. Ability to recruit and retain qualified teaching staff, and
4. Costs of achieving or maintaining high quality.

As is discussed below, within the first category, the study team examined not only a respondent's general understanding of and satisfaction with All STARS but also their stated intention to improve their site's rating within the next year. As regards structural and administrative improvements, it is important to examine access to training, technical assistance, and coaching as important supports for achieving the implementation of quality classroom practices. Within the category of qualified teaching staff, it is important to examine current educational status of early educators as well as the proportion of staff enrolled in coursework to advance their education. Finally, within the realm of cost, it is important to understand the full spectrum of costs related to achieving and maintaining quality. For example, a

more educated workforce can reasonably command higher wages. Further, there are ongoing costs associated with materials and supplies. This section contains information gathered from participating sites as well as from a survey of educators across the state.

Desire to Advance in Rating

Administrator understanding of All STARS

Study participants reported good or better understanding of three aspects of All STARS: (1) overall goals; (2) how All STARS affects, or may affect, their sites; and (3) how to submit documents to All STARS. As is shown in Table 10, there is good or better understanding among administrators (participating in the study) as to All STARS' goals. There was slightly less understanding about the impact of All STARS on sites and even less understanding (principally among child care and preschool program administrators) about how to submit documentation⁶.

Table 10 Administrator Understanding of All STARS

	Complete or Good Understanding			
	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
The overall goals of All STARS	83% (182 of 220)	74% (100 of 135)	96% (46 of 48)	97% (36 of 37)
How All STARS affects or may affect your site	78% (172 of 221)	72% (98 of 136)	85% (41 of 48)	89% (33 of 37)
How to submit documents to All STARS	71% (156 of 221)	63% (86 of 136)	75% (36 of 48)	92% (34 of 37)

Administrator satisfaction with All STARS

There was good or better satisfaction among study administrators with several aspects of All STARS (

⁶ Note: in preschool programs, All STARS documents may be coordinated and submitted by a Program Coordinator working at the district level. Thus, site administrators may not be familiar with the processes for submitting documents.

Table 11) including (1) information about All STARS; (2) support for participating in All STARS; and (3) support for improving quality. There was less satisfaction in two areas, however: (1) incentives for supporting site quality and (2) processes for submitting information. These responses may be opportunities for strengthening financial support to sites as well as infrastructure for managing the initiative.

Table 11

Administrator Satisfaction with All STARS

	Highly Satisfied or Satisfied			
	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
The information you have received regarding All STARS	80% (177 of 220)	76% (102 of 135)	81% (39 of 48)	97% (36 of 37)
The support you have received for participating in All STARS	80% (177 of 221)	74% (101 of 136)	85% (41 of 48)	95% (35 of 37)
The support (such as coaching, technical assistance, or mentoring) you have received to improve classroom quality at your site.	79% (175 of 221)	71% (96 of 136)	92% (44 of 48)	95% (35 of 37)
The incentives provided to support your site's quality	69% (153 of 221)	63% (85 of 136)	56% (27 of 48)	86% (32 of 37)
The process for submitting information to All STARS	65% (144 of 221)	70% (95 of 136)	54% (26 of 48)	86% (32 of 37)

Despite good or better understanding or satisfaction with All STARS, not all sites intend to improve star rating. As is shown in

Table 12, after controlling for the sites that already are 5-stars and thus cannot increase their rating, just over half of participants (54%) with the potential to increase star rating also indicated an intention to improve. Fewer preschool programs indicated this intention—compared to child care and Head Start sites.

Cost, time and administrative burden are top barriers cited for not advancing in All STARS

The percentages of respondents from both the onsite study and the statewide survey who reported an intention to improve rating in the next year were similar—overall, the proportion was between 50% and 60%. Some of the reasons both groups supplied for not increasing included (1) cost—which may reflect the cost of classroom or site improvements as well as costs related to recruiting and retaining qualified staff, as well as (2) time—with some respondents needing time to accrue credentials or improvements or (3) burden related to paperwork and processes.

Table 12

Administrator Intentions to Improve Star Rating

Site intends to improve star rating in the next year			
Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
54% (86 of 160)	56% (75 of 133)	29% (4 of 14)	54% (7 of 13)

Findings from Universal Survey of Early Learning Professionals

Also noteworthy, of the 382 administrators who participated in the statewide survey (which was available to any early learning site in the state), 227 (59%) reported an intention to improve their rating within the next year. Some of the respondents who did not report an intention to improve already were 5-stars. For others, reasons for not improving included:

Some of the reasons respondents (from both the participating sites and the universal survey) gave for not planning to improve included:

- It has been less than a year since obtaining our 3-star rating. It is our desire to always move forward, maintain and improve.
- We have reached our maximum stars level for the credentials that our staff hold
- Having enough staff that is willing to get CDA/commonwealth degree
- Want to focus on maintaining 4-stars before adding additional measure.
- Just received rating this year and there are many barriers to advancement because we are a school age only facility.
- Want to focus on maintaining 4-stars before adding additional measures
- Just received rating this year, there are too many barriers to advance since we are school age
- We will focus our efforts on maintaining our 4-star rating as well as include improving our strategic plan
- At this time, this is all we are able to achieve.
- Some of the things we need to do to improve our rating will need more time.
- I am ok with being a star 4
- I do not want to go any higher than 4-star. I am close to retirement
- It is my opinion that a small center cannot financially afford to pay health insurance or retirement. This is not an option or possibility for us. We have several PT employees and some are mature in age and are not interested in obtaining a CDA at the point.
- We are currently at our highest achievement level possible considering staff credentials, etc.
- Finances
- Our next step would be accreditation. We tried several years ago and could not get the appropriate number of surveys back. I think electronic surveys would work better.
- Unfortunately, to get a higher star rating, this entails quite a bit of money spent to bring people into the center to evaluate us. We are a non-profit organization.
- We are currently certified until 2020. At that time we will reapply.
- New staff, I don't feel that we are ready
- We will wait another year to go for our 5-star rating due to the fact that we are working on NAEYC accreditation in the next 12 months
- Because I just became a star 3 level
- We achieved our level 4 this past fall. We are planning to keep improving in all areas of the new All STARS but want to work on doing some of the new items as well. We also have some new staff in key areas who need to continue growing their positions.
- Have to be NAEYC accredited
- We may not have enough staff that have completed higher education
- Staff turnaround is high for aftercare in school. Everyone wants a full-time job and sees this as a stepping stone.
- Too much red tape and costly to implement
- No degree
- Hard to score high enough in each classroom
- I just achieved a level 4 rating last Nov 2017 and I'm going to wait a year to try for a 5-star rating

- As a school age program I am unable to get enough points to achieve a higher score. Some of the standards do not apply to us. Also we employ mainly college students and we cannot provide them benefits as they only work 3-3.25 hrs per day
- I cannot meet the requirements
- We just improved from a 2 star to a 4-star rating. We are striving to maintain the 4-star for now.
- I am happy with my level of quality. 5-star requires accreditation which is costly and time consuming and not much reward for level of effort.
- We are up to date until 2020
- We are 4-star rated already. We will continually strive to maintain our 5-star rating.
- Will be very difficult with age groups in classrooms
- We are planning to apply to improve our star rating next year
- Because in the time that STARS has been around other than helping me with state. I don't see the point. I don't feel like belonging to STARS has done anything to improve my center. My center is going alone just fine. No parent calling for child care ever ask if I have STARS. Sorry
- Center is closing:-(
- Do not want to have to "score" a certain score on the rating scales.
- Due to lack of funding. Even though you receive incentives to upgrade, once you go to 4- & 5-star level, it costs your business. It's hard for us to do financially, even though we would like to.
- Due to the regulations you require for 3-star, we don't have access to certain things from the office. Again, we need different regulations.
- Funding. We need money to make improvements, but cannot charge our families (many of whom are working multiple jobs and are receiving assistance) more (oddly enough, the reason we have to do All STARS is because we accept families who need assistance, which is supposed to make sure at-risk children are receiving quality childcare, but to improve our rating, we would have to charge more, which alienates those who need the assistance the most). We cannot pay our employees what they are worth (a living wage) and cannot give benefits. We rent our building and can make only so many improvements. We have great difficulty finding quality staff who are willing to stay for the amount of pay (with huge responsibilities), and it makes it difficult to train new people frequently.
- I don't need it
- I feel I go above and beyond to make my center a qualified and loving place. I think All STARS would add to the paperwork I already have to complete.
- I have a lot going on and I want my teachers to be comfortable with the new changes.
- I will need more qualified staff. once they get their credentials they move to a better paying job in the school system.
- It is not relevant to our center.
- It too much to cover, papers work. We have to be in compliance in state regulations, health dep, fire marshals All STARS and etc. and all required papers works which take a lot of time. We prefer to spend time working with the children
- Just not interested at this time
- Just recently received 4-Star and I am delighted!
- Limited value-add to the service provided to clients.
- MONEY
- Not worth the trouble. The incentive is based on how many children are on child care assistance and we only have 8 out of XXX. It is a really odd system to say because you don't have children on child care assistance you don't have the same quality as other centers. Same number of STARS should be the incentive. I really have no idea how this is fair. It's like center are being punished for having parents who don't receive assistance.
- Our company does not offer benefits to the part time employees in our child care program
- Parents don't know or care about the STARS program. All centers and children deserve quality care that is affordable and teachers do not need a degree to do this kind of work.

- We are a school that strives to go above and beyond minimum standards but feel like the STARS system is focused on detailed standards that are difficult for a part-time preschool to achieve.
- Sometimes it's a struggle for us to even meet the 3 STAR requirements, due to the difficulty of hiring staff. Much of the time we wish was spent working on improving the center is just spent keeping the center running. It's not easy finding staff to work such an underpaid job.
- Too much paperwork and proof of things we do
- Unfair scoring by raters
- We are a 4 STAR center until 2020. We may try to improve within the next couple years
- We are a for profit center so it's impossible for us to lower ratios and offer insurance to employees
- We are already a 4-star and with this being a new rating for us I want to concentrate on successfully implementing our commitments.
- We are going through a remodel and it is not good timing.
- we are happy where we are
- We are small and are not financially able to meet some areas
- We do not participate in any programs that require us to take state funding.
- We do not wish to participate in STARS.
- We have an old building that needs renovation and we are beginning the long process that will lead to major improvements. Until then, I feel like a level 3 is about as high as we can go for now. Our building has too many challenges.
- We just went to a three star in January
- We will need more staff credentials to be added that I am not going to require.
- We will probably wait another year before seeking a raise in ranking.

Implementing Structural and Administrative Improvements in Quality

Kentucky's structural and administrative goals for quality are codified in the three domains presented below:

Classroom and Instruction Quality

To advance in star rating, sites must document both required and optional standards, using the hybrid approach. At the 2-star level, sites must document:

- 50% of teaching staff have professional learning activities in developmental screening, and
- Completing an environmental self-assessment using a valid and reliable tool appropriate for the ages/stages of children served.

To advance to a 3-star, sites must participate in an environmental observation on a valid and reliable tool (no minimum score) and accrue 8 points from Classroom and Instruction Quality (as well as 7 or more points in domains of the site's choice). To advance to a 4-star rating, sites must achieve a minimum score of 4.0 on the Environment Rating Scale for observed classrooms and accrue 8 points from Classroom and Instruction Quality (as well as 17 points in domains of the site's choice). Finally, to achieve a 5-star rating, sites must achieve a minimum score of 5.0 on the Environment Rating Scale for observed classrooms and accrue 8 points from Classroom and Instruction Quality (as well as 27 points in domains of the site's choice).

Family and Community Engagement

Sites do not have to document any required Family and Community Engagement standards to achieve a 1- or 2-star rating. However, to advance to a 3-, 4-, or 5-star rating, sites must document at least 2 points (at each rating level), in addition to 7, 17, or 27 points in domains of the sites choice.

Accruing Points in Classroom and Instruction Quality

- Ensure developmental screening within 90 days of enrollment and referral (if needed) within 30 days of screenings for all enrolled children— *this standard is worth 2 points in All STARS*
- Implements curriculum that aligns with Kentucky Early Learning Standards— *this standard is worth 2 points in All STARS*
- Implements specialized supplemental curricula—*this standard is worth 1 point in All STARS*
- Kentucky Early Learning Standards are incorporated into lesson plans— *this standard is worth 2 points in All STARS*
- Staff support IFSP/IEP goals of individual children— *this standard is worth 2 points in All STARS*
- Staff conduct ongoing curriculum-based assessment to inform instruction— *this standard is worth 2 points in All STARS*
- Assessment results are used to inform individual and group instruction— *this standard is worth 2 points in All STARS*
- Instructional assessment findings are shared with families— *this standard is worth 2 points in All STARS*
- National accreditation acknowledged by state approved organization— *this standard is worth 1 point in All STARS*
- Maintain NAEYC staff-to-child ratios and group size requirements—*this standard is worth up to 4 points in All STARS*

Accruing Points in Family and Community Engagement

- Program/ Site administrator and 75% of staff complete professional learning activities related to strengthening family engagement— *this standard is worth 2 points in All STARS*
- Implement family engagement activities that promote children's development and learning— *this standard is worth 2 points in All STARS*
- Two-way communication with families— *this standard is worth 2 points in All STARS*
- Implements transition supports for children and families— *this standard is worth 2 points in All STARS*
- Share community resources with families— *this standard is worth 1 point in All STARS*
- Builds partnerships with community agencies— *this standard is worth 1 point in All STARS*

Administrative and Leadership Practices

As with Family and Community Engagement, sites do not have to document any required Administrative and Leadership Practices elements. However, to advance to a 3-, 4-, or 5-star rating, sites must document at least 2 points in Administrative and Leadership Practices, at each level (in addition to the 7, 17, or 27 points that sites can choose).

The ability to achieve standards in each of these domains reflects (a) site leadership and mandates for quality; (2) access to and use of appropriate curricula and assessments; (c) sufficient financial resources to achieve desired teacher-child ratios and other improvements (including national accreditation); (d) sufficient resources to support staff benefits and other professional activities; (e) time to spend on planning, reflection, and professional development, and (f) staff knowledge about and ability to implement curricula, assessments, leadership, and family and community engagement practices. The issue of cost is discussed separately, below. The other capacities that are suggested are a function of education (also discussed separately) as well as a system of ongoing training, technical assistance, coaching, and development.

Accruing Points in Administrative and Leadership Practices

- Teaching staff are provided weekly lesson planning time— *this standard is worth 2 points in All STARS*
- Has a system for evaluating staff performance by monitoring and providing feedback for improvement— *this standard is worth 2 points in All STARS*
- Implements a continuous improvement plan— *this standard is worth 2 points in All STARS*
- Provides at least 11 days paid time off annually— *this standard is worth 1 point in All STARS*
- Provides health insurance— *this standard is worth 1 point in All STARS*
- Provides retirement— *this standard is worth 1 point in All STARS*
- Program Administrator/Director is a member of an Early Care and Education professional organization— *this standard is worth 1 point in All STARS*

Access to Technical Assistance, Coaching, or Other Supports

Participating administrators provided feedback on the supports that they considered either important or very important for improving quality; findings are presented in Table 14. Overall, the top supports identified by participating administrators were:

- **Knowing who to contact for help, coaching, or technical assistance,**
- **Support or assistance to understand how to stay at high quality in the future, and**
- **Grants or financial assistance to buy materials and resources for classrooms.**

Access to Technical Assistance or Coaching

- Participating administrators reported that knowing who to contact for help was an important support.
- Overall, 83% of respondents reported knowing who to contact.

It is helpful to know, as well, that the majority of participating administrators reported knowing the identity of their technical assistance contact (Table 13). This is true more of participants from preschool programs, than for Head Start or child care sites.

Table 13

Administrator Feedback on Knowing their Technical Assistance Contacts

Administrator reports knowing the identify of the technical assistance provider, coach, or consultant			
Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
83%	77%	94%	89%
(188 of 227)	(109 of 141)	(46 of 49)	(33 of 37)

It also may be helpful to examine the importance of different supports by operational model; the top three supports for each model are shown below and in Table 14. Note that the majority of sites in the study were child care programs; overall findings are weighted towards their responses. Also, there may be different needs that are influenced by operational model.

Child Care

- Knowing who to contact for help, coaching, or technical assistance
- Support or assistance to understand how to stay at high quality in the future
- Grants or financial assistance to buy materials and resources for classrooms

Preschool

- Knowing who to contact for help, coaching, or technical assistance
- Access to technical equipment such as a computer or scanner
- Support or assistance to understand how to stay at high quality in the future

Head Start

- Assistance or support in becoming accredited
- Grants or financial assistance to buy materials and resources for classrooms
- Grants or financial assistance to improve my site (e.g., landscaping, building repairs, painting)

Table 14

Administrator Feedback on Supports for Improving Quality

	Important or Very Important			
	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
Knowing who to contact for help, coaching, or technical assistance	91% (204 of 224)	97% (136 of 140)	79% (37 of 47)	84% (31 of 37)
Support or assistance to understand how to stay at high quality in the future	87% (195 of 223)	96% (133 of 139)	74% (35 of 47)	73% (27 of 37)
Grants or financial assistance to buy materials and resources for classrooms	87% (195 of 223)	95% (132 of 139)	64% (30 of 47)	89% (33 of 37)
Access to intentional, face-to-face, trainings and professional development opportunities in my area	86% (191 of 223)	94% (131 of 139)	64% (30 of 47)	81% (30 of 37)
Financial assistance or support to retain more highly qualified staff	84% (186 of 221)	93% (127 of 137)	70% (33 of 47)	70% (26 of 37)
Grants or financial assistance to improve my site (e.g., landscaping, building repairs, painting)	84% (187 of 223)	93% (129 of 139)	53% (25 of 47)	89% (33 of 37)
Financial assistance or support to attract more highly qualified staff	83% (184 of 223)	91% (127 of 139)	68% (32 of 47)	68% (25 of 37)
A peer mentor, coach, or TA provider I can talk to	82% (182 of 222)	91% (125 of 138)	62% (29 of 47)	76% (28 of 37)
Access to online or computer-based trainings and professional development opportunities	81% (179 of 222)	92% (127 of 138)	62% (29 of 47)	62% (23 of 37)
Access to a reliable internet connection	81% (179 of 222)	78% (108 of 138)	83% (39 of 47)	86% (32 of 37)
Guidance or assistance in using incentives to purchases materials for my site that align with what I need to do to improve my star rating	80% (178 of 223)	89% (124 of 139)	62% (29 of 47)	68% (25 of 37)
On-site assistance in walking through and understanding the requirements for ALL STARS ratings	79% (176 of 224)	88% (123 of 140)	51% (24 of 47)	78% (29 of 37)

	Important or Very Important			
	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
Support or assistance to understand how to afford and pay for high quality practices	79% (175 of 222)	90% (124 of 138)	64% (30 of 47)	57% (21 of 37)
Regular, on-site, assistance in meeting the requirements for ALL STARS ratings (e.g., help with curriculum and lesson planning, screening and assessments, learning environments, and developmentally appropriate practices)	77% (171 of 223)	83% (116 of 139)	57% (27 of 47)	76% (28 of 37)
Online or computer-based support for meeting the requirements for ALL STARS (e.g., help with curriculum and lesson planning, screening and assessments, learning environments, and developmentally appropriate practices) ratings	75% (167 of 223)	86% (120 of 139)	53% (25 of 47)	59% (22 of 37)
Online or computer-based support for understanding the requirements for ALL STARS ratings	73% (163 of 224)	84% (118 of 140)	51% (24 of 47)	57% (21 of 37)
Access to technical equipment such as a computer or scanner	73% (162 of 222)	76% (105 of 138)	79% (37 of 47)	54% (20 of 37)
Assistance or support in becoming accredited	71% (158 of 223)	72% (100 of 139)	51% (24 of 47)	92% (34 of 37)

Additional Supports

Participants provided additional suggestions for supports, which are shown below and grouped by operational model.

Child Care

- Continued support even after reaching higher stars
- Financial assistance for staff salaries
- Grants to assist families that may not qualify for the subsidy program but struggle to pay for quality childcare.
- Our quality changes every time we have staff turnover. I rarely find someone with any formal education in EC. We could use ways to recruit quality staff.
- Parent/community education on why STAR is important
- We need school age specific regs

Preschool

- A clear crosswalk between KY preschool, childcare, Head Start, regulations
- Fee training for clock hours online

Head Start

- Understanding KY career lattice level

Findings from Universal Survey of Early Learning Professionals

On the universal survey, available to all early educators across the state, respondents were asked to report on the nature and availability of preferred forms of support. As can be seen in Table 15

Error!
Reference source not found., the most preferred forms of support include:

- Ongoing discussions and trading ideas in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) or Communities of Practice,
- Observing others in high quality sites or classrooms (having things modeled for me),
- On site coaching with external consultants/coaches, and
- Offsite professional development trainings or classes.

Early Educator Feedback on Professional Support

- We have participated in all of these. Discussions in group is usually not informative or dominated by one person. My staff are quick, knowledgeable and desire extensive, informative training that can be implemented immediately into their curriculum. That type of training is hard to find.
- A monthly conference at a hotel dining room that includes guest speakers, door prizes, sharing of ideas from other centers and lunch! All free and sponsored by local businesses.
- Face-to-face training for my staff.
- I like getting ideas from others and trying out ones I like on my own time.
- Information sent by email such as newsletters, white papers, updates, etc.
- The tools to do the classes at home. Even at this day and age not everyone has computers and intranet in the home and not able to run to the public library after work

However, these methods of support were not necessarily widely or easily available (Table 16). For example, 68% of respondents reported that Professional Learning Communities or Communities of Practice were at least somewhat available, while 57% reported the same for “observing others in high quality sites or classrooms.” Three-quarters of respondents reported that on-site coaching was at least somewhat available, while 89% of respondents reported the same for offsite professional development.

Table 15

Preferred Methods for Receiving Support

	Most Preferred or Acceptable
Ongoing discussions and trading ideas in Professional Learning Communities or Communities of Practice	87% (428 of 492)
Observing others in high quality sites or classrooms (having things modeled for me)	86% (422 of 491)
On site coaching with external consultants/coaches	85% (416 of 492)
Offsite professional development trainings or classes	85% (417 of 492)
Participating in a professional group made up of my peers in my county or across the state	81% (398 of 490)
Peer learning and supervision from staff in my same school/site	80% (389 of 489)
Online trainings and courses	79% (384 of 489)

Table 16

Availability of Different Types of Support

	Very or Somewhat Available
Online trainings and courses	90% (440 of 490)
Offsite professional development trainings or classes	89% (437 of 492)
On site coaching with external consultants/coaches	75% (372 of 493)
Peer learning and supervision from staff in my same school/site	71% (347 of 488)
Observing others in high quality sites or classrooms (having things modeled for me)	57% (280 of 489)
Ongoing discussions and trading ideas in Professional Learning Communities or Communities of Practice	68% (335 of 490)
Participating in a professional group made up of my peers in my county or across the state	63% (305 of 488)

Professionals may experience challenges when accessing or using professional supports. To test this idea, individuals who participated in the universal survey were asked to report on the extent to which various factors served as barriers. Respondents include administrators as well as teachers and other staff. Results are presented in Table 17 and Table 18.

As is shown in Table 17, between 15% and 42% of respondents reported that there were no barriers to different types of professional support. Of the respondents that remained, the primary barriers included (a) finding time or substitutes (Table 17) and (b) cost or affordability (Table 18).

Table 17 Barriers to Receiving Support: Non-Cost Barriers (495 total responses)

	Of the individuals who reported having at least one barrier...			No Barriers
	Time or Substitutes	Transportation or Location	Other	
On site coaching with external consultants/coaches	64% (242 of 377)	8% (32 of 377)	12% (46 of 377)	24% (118 of 495)
Offsite professional development trainings or classes	68% (281 of 411)	20% (82 of 411)	9% (35 of 411)	17% (84 of 495)
Online trainings and courses	45% (128 of 286)	3% (8 of 286)	15% (42 of 286)	42% (209 of 495)
Peer learning and supervision from staff in my same school/site	65% (227 of 347)	6% (22 of 347)	23% (80 of 347)	30% (148 of 495)
Observing others in high quality sites or classrooms (having things modeled for me)	78% (329 of 420)	18% (74 of 420)	12% (51 of 420)	15% (75 of 495)
Ongoing discussions and trading ideas in Professional Learning Communities or Communities of Practice	61% (207 of 337)	16% (53 of 337)	22% (73 of 337)	32% (158 of 495)
Participating in a professional group made up of my peers in my county or across the state	64% (247 of 386)	19% (72 of 386)	19% (74 of 386)	22% (109 of 495)

Table 18 Barriers to Receiving Support: Cost Factors

	Of the individuals who reported having at least one barrier...		
	Cost or Affordability	Need Computer	Need Internet
On site coaching with external consultants/coaches	45% (171 of 377)	3% (12 of 377)	2% (7 of 377)
Offsite professional development trainings or classes	46% (190 of 411)	2% (9 of 411)	2% (7 of 411)
Online trainings and courses	45% (129 of 286)	13% (36 of 286)	9% (25 of 286)

	Of the individuals who reported having at least one barrier...		
	Cost or Affordability	Need Computer	Need Internet
Peer learning and supervision from staff in my same school/site	14% (47 of 347)	1% (3 of 347)	1% (4 of 347)
Observing others in high quality sites or classrooms (having things modeled for me)	15% (65 of 420)	<1% (2 of 420)	<1% (2 of 420)
Ongoing discussions and trading ideas in Professional Learning Communities or Communities of Practice	17% (57 of 337)	3% (10 of 337)	3% (9 of 337)
Participating in a professional group made up of my peers in my county or across the state	18% (71 of 386)	2% (6 of 386)	2% (7 of 386)

Recruiting and Retaining Qualified Teachers

Education and training play a prominent role in All STARS standards. To achieve a 2-star rating, sites must document that:

- The Program Site Administrator/Director receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices and/or teaching and learning or have an approved early childhood credential or degree, and
- 50% of teaching staff receive 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices and/or teaching and learning or have an approved early childhood credential or degree

To achieve a 3-star rating, sites must accrue 2 additional points in staff qualifications and professional development (plus 7 points in domains of the sites choice). The same is true for both a 4-star and a 5-star rating (plus 17 to 27 points in domains of the sites choice, respectively). These points can be accrued by documenting:

- Teaching staff complete appropriate credential as outlined on the Kentucky Career Lattice (50% achieve Level 1 or above; 40% achieve Level 2 or above; 30% achieve Level 3 or above; 20% achieve Level 4 or above)—*this standard is worth up to 4 points in All STARS*
- Program Site Administrator/Director achieves appropriate credential as outlined on the Kentucky Career Lattice (Level 2 or above; Level 3 or above; Level 4 or above) —*this standard is worth up to 3 points in All STARS*
- 50% of teaching staff participate in professional learning activities related to curriculum-based assessment—*this standard is worth 1 point in All STARS*
- Program Site Administrator/Director achieves the Kentucky Director Credential or holds an administrator certificate in a field not related to early childhood and the equivalent of 3 hours in child development or at least 5 years full-time related experience in the early care and education field—*this standard is worth 1 point in All STARS*

- Individual PD plan aligns with state identified professional core knowledge and competencies—*this standard is worth 1 point in All STARS.*

The Kentucky Career Lattice is featured in the standards (Table 19). The highest level in the lattice, for teachers, is level 5, which reflects the achievement of a Master’s degree and coursework specific to early childhood. Level 4 reflects the achievement of a Bachelor’s degree and coursework specific to early childhood. To continue to advance in star rating, sites must document the proportion of their teaching staff that have achieved (or are progressing towards) the level 4 rating.

Table 19

Kentucky's Career Lattice

Kentucky Career Lattice

LEVELS	EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE
1	H.S. Diploma or equivalent Commonwealth Child Care Credential
2	CDA
3	Associate degree in early childhood or the equivalent of 30 credit hours in early childhood coursework OR Bachelor's degree in a field related to early childhood and at least 1 year full time related experience in early childhood field OR Bachelor's degree in a field not related to early childhood and 10 years full time related experience in early childhood field
4	At least a Bachelor's degree in early childhood OR Bachelor's degree in a related field to early childhood and the equivalent of 3 credit hours in child development and at least 1 year full time related experience in EC field OR Bachelor's degree in a field not related to early childhood, the equivalent of 3 credit hours in child development, and at least 10 years full time related experience in early childhood field
5	Master's degree in early childhood OR Master's degree in a field related to early childhood, 3 credit hours in child development, and 1 year full time related experience early childhood field OR Master's degree in a field not related to early childhood, the equivalent of 3 credit hours in child development, and at least 10 years full time related experience in early childhood field
Administrator/Director	Holds a Kentucky Director's Credential OR Holds an administrator certificate in a field not related to early childhood and the equivalent of 3 credit hours in child development or at least 5 years full time related experience in early childhood field

Current Educational Status

Information about current educational status was retrieved from administrators at participating sites and reflects staffing for the entire site (and not just the classrooms that were observed). As can be seen in Table 20, the majority of lead and assistant teachers, overall, are reported to have less than a two-year degree. However, an examination of educational achievement by operational model reveals that private child care sites, in particular, may have the most ground to cover in advancing teacher education. This is due to requirements for participating sites that are attached to operational model. Preschool and Head Start sites, for example, must conform to requirements that lead teachers have college degrees, which is a standard not required for the licensing of child care sites.

Table 20 Educational Achievement of Administrators and Teachers at Participating Study Sites

		Less than 2-year degree	Two-year degree in Early Childhood or Related	Four-year degree or higher in Early Childhood or Related	Two-year or higher degree in a field other than Early Childhood
Overall	Administrators	30% (45 of 151)	14% (21 of 151)	34% (54 of 151)	21% (31 of 151)
	Lead Teachers	66% (439 of 677)	8% (54 of 677)	19% (129 of 677)	8% (55 of 677)
	Assistant Teachers	78% (418 of 539)	4% (21 of 539)	6% (33 of 539)	12% (67 of 539)
Private Child Care	Administrators	36% (43 of 118)	16% (19 of 118)	23% (27 of 118)	25% (29 of 118)
	Lead Teachers	79% (433 of 546)	4% (20 of 546)	9% (48 of 546)	8% (45 of 546)
	Assistant	83% (320 of 384)	1% (3 of 384)	5% (19 of 384)	11% (42 of 384)
Preschool Program	Administrators	--	--	100% (12 of 12)	--
	Lead Teachers	--	6% (3 of 52)	85% (44 of 52)	10% (5 of 52)
	Assistant Teachers	66% (46 of 70)	9% (6 of 70)	7% (5 of 70)	19% (13 of 70)
Head Start	Administrators	10% (2 of 21)	10% (2 of 21)	71% (15 of 21)	10% (2 of 21)
	Lead Teachers	8% (6 of 79)	39% (31 of 79)	47% (37 of 79)	6% (5 of 79)
	Assistant Teachers	61% (52 of 85)	14% (12 of 85)	11% (9 of 85)	14% (12 of 85)

Enrollment to Pursue Additional Education (from Teacher Questionnaire)

Teachers in participating sites who were observed by the study team using the Environment Rating Scales in their classrooms also completed surveys asking for feedback on All STARS and family engagement practices. As shown in Table 21, on average 19% of teachers reported being enrolled (at the time of the study) in coursework. Of the respondents who reported current enrollment in coursework, 50% reported having a scholarship. Of those individuals, 47% reported that he or she could not continue their education without a scholarship.

Table 21 Teacher Feedback on Course Enrollment and Scholarships

	Enrolled in Coursework			
	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
Teacher reports being enrolled in coursework to advance education or qualifications	19% (154 of 810)	20% (110 of 552)	19% (26 of 140)	15% (18 of 118)
Of the individuals who are enrolled in coursework:				
Teacher reports having a scholarship	50% (77 of 154)	56% (62 of 110)	31% (8 of 26)	39% (7 of 18)
Of the individuals who have a scholarship:				
Teacher reports he or she could NOT continue coursework without the scholarship	47% (36 of 77)	47% (29 of 62)	50% (4 of 8)	43% (3 of 7)

Cost of Achieving and Maintaining Quality

The cost of achieving and maintaining quality is a major consideration, especially for private child care facilities⁷. Costs occur in both direct and indirect forms. Direct forms include the direct costs of compensating (through wages and benefits) staff more, in order to recruit and retain more educated and qualified teachers. There also may be direct costs related to the purchase of supplies (including technology for or equipment), curricula, assessments, and so on. Indirect costs include the time needed to meaningfully invest in

Top Cost Factors

Participating administrators reported on the top five cost factors that impact quality. The most popular responses included:

- Costs of paying teachers and staff more,
- Costs of finding and retaining highly qualified teachers or staff,
- Costs of making capital or structural upgrades to your site,
- Costs of ensuring there is a low teacher-child ratio, and
- Costs of helping teachers advance their education.

⁷ Private child care programs don't receive the institutional support that the other models receive. These programs rely on payments from families, either through a family's direct tuition payments or through the system of subsidized payments. Thus, it can be difficult for child care programs to invest in staffing or other improvements that might result in long-term quality.

implementing higher quality classroom practices. This may include costs such as time for lesson planning, training, coaching, or other professional development activities as well as time needed to ensure ongoing continuous improvement and daily support for the implementation of quality practices.

Participating administrators were asked to identify the top five cost factors that may prevent them from improving quality; results are shown in Table 22. The most popular responses included the costs of:

- paying teachers and staff more,
- finding and retaining highly qualified teachers or staff,
- making capital or structural upgrades to your site,
- ensuring there is a low teacher-child ratio, and
- helping teachers advance their education.

Top Cost Factors by Operational Model

- The top cost factors for child care sites were costs of paying teachers and staff more and costs of finding and retaining highly qualified teachers or staff,
- The top cost factors for preschool programs were costs of ensuring there is a low teacher-child ratio and costs of making capital or structural upgrades to your site.
- The top cost factors for Head Start programs were costs of paying teachers and staff more and costs of finding and retaining highly qualified teachers or staff.

The factors that were least likely to be identified by respondents included the costs of:

- achieving teacher or director credentials,
- purchasing child assessments,
- finding time to do research or stay current with Kentucky requirements and quality indicators,
- site self-assessments, and
- communicating with families.

Table 22 Top Cost Factors that Impact Quality

	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
Costs of paying teachers and staff more	65% (148 of 227)	74% (104 of 141)	43% (21 of 49)	62% (23 of 37)
Costs of finding and retaining highly qualified teachers or staff	56% (127 of 227)	61% (86 of 141)	41% (20 of 49)	57% (21 of 37)
Costs of making capital or structural upgrades to your site (such as expanding the kitchen or expanding classroom space)	41% (92 of 227)	41% (58 of 141)	51% (25 of 49)	24% (9 of 37)
Costs of ensuring there is a low teacher-child ratio (that is, fewer children for each teacher)	41% (93 of 227)	35% (50 of 141)	76% (37 of 49)	16% (6 of 37)
Costs of helping teachers advance their education	39% (89 of 227)	39% (55 of 141)	37% (18 of 49)	43% (16 of 37)

	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
Costs of providing benefits to teachers and staff	36% (81 of 227)	48% (68 of 141)	8% (4 of 49)	24% (9 of 37)
Costs of purchasing curricula or classroom materials	31% (70 of 227)	32% (45 of 141)	29% (14 of 49)	30% (11 of 37)
Costs associated with staff turnover	29% (66 of 227)	35% (49 of 141)	8% (4 of 49)	35% (13 of 37)
Costs of ensuring teachers or staff get training and professional development	27% (61 of 227)	28% (40 of 141)	35% (17 of 49)	11% (4 of 37)
Costs of finding time for teachers to do planning for their classroom or children	22% (49 of 227)	17% (24 of 141)	31% (15 of 49)	27% (10 of 37)
Costs of achieving national accreditation	20% (45 of 227)	20% (28 of 141)	24% (12 of 49)	14% (5 of 37)
Costs of improving your own education	14% (32 of 227)	18% (25 of 141)	--	19% (7 of 37)
Costs of finding the time to organize and submit All STARS paperwork	11% (26 of 227)	11% (15 of 141)	22% (11 of 49)	--
Costs of achieving teacher or director credentials	9% (21 of 227)	11% (16 of 141)	6% (3 of 49)	5% (2 of 37)
Costs of purchasing child assessments	7% (16 of 227)	9% (12 of 141)	8% (4 of 49)	--
Costs of finding time to do research or stay current with Kentucky requirements and quality indicators	7% (16 of 227)	11% (15 of 141)	2% (1 of 49)	--
Costs of site self-assessments	4% (10 of 227)	6% (9 of 141)	--	3% (1 of 37)
Costs of communicating with families	1% (2 of 227)	1% (1 of 141)	2% (1 of 49)	--

Site Preparedness to Improve or Meet Standards

Finally, the study team asked participating sites to report on their ability to meet individual All STARS standards “if rated today.” Not all respondents rated each standard, however, which could indicate a need to conduct additional training or outreach of the meaning or intention of specific standards. It also is important to remember that most standards are optional—sites can choose how they accrue points across standards within the hybrid system.

Required standards are identified in their respective tables, below. Note as well that at star levels 3 and higher, sites must participate in an observation using the Environment Rating Scales assessments. Study findings for individual assessments are presented in the next part of this report.

As regards readiness to meet Classroom and Instruction Quality standards (Table 23), the standards administrators were most ready to meet included:

- CI-1. 50% of teaching staff have professional learning activities in developmental screening,
- CI-4. Implements curriculum that aligns with Kentucky Early Learning Standards (KYELS), and
- CI-10. Instructional assessment findings are shared with families.

The standard administrators were least ready to meet was CI-11: National Accreditation acknowledged by state approved organization.

There was variation across administrators, when findings were examined by operational model. For example, 75% of administrators at child care sites were most ready to meet standard CI-1: 50% of teaching staff have professional learning activities in developmental screening. In comparison, 100% of administrators at preschool and Head Start sites were ready to meet standard CI-3L: Ensure developmental screening within 90 days of enrollment and referral (if needed) within 30 days of screening for all enrolled children, as well as other standards (see Table 23). This highlights the practical impact of differences between operational models—remembering that the different models have different guidelines and requirements (in addition to All STARS) to which they are accountable.

Table 23 Administrator Feedback on Readiness to Meet Classroom and Instruction Quality Standards

	Respondent indicated “If rated today, could meet standard”			
	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
CI-1. 50% of teaching staff have professional learning activities in developmental screening— REQUIRED to advance to a 2-star rating	83% (178 of 214)	75% (98 of 130)	94% (45 of 48)	97% (35 of 36)
CI-2. Complete an environmental self-assessment using a valid and reliable tool appropriate for the ages/settings of children served— REQUIRED to advance to a 2-star rating	78% (163 of 209)	67% (85 of 126)	94% (44 of 47)	94% (34 of 36)
CI-3. Ensure developmental screening within 90 days of enrollment and referral (if needed) within 30 days of screening for all enrolled children	72% (150 of 207)	54% (67 of 124)	100% (47 of 47)	100% (36 of 36)
CI-4. Implements curriculum that aligns with Kentucky Early Learning Standards (KYELS)	81% (171 of 210)	71% (90 of 126)	96% (46 of 48)	97% (35 of 36)
CI-5. Implements specialized supplemental curriculum	73% (148 of 203)	60% (72 of 121)	89% (42 of 47)	97% (34 of 35)
CI-6. KY Early Learning Standards (KYELS) are incorporated in Lesson Plans	74% (146 of 197)	63% (73 of 116)	87% (40 of 46)	94% (33 of 35)
CI-7. Staff support Individual Family Support Plans (IFSP)/ Individual Education Plans (IEP) goals of individual children	73% (150 of 205)	57% (69 of 122)	96% (46 of 48)	100% (35 of 35)
CI-8. Staff conduct ongoing curriculum-based assessment to inform instruction	74% (146 of 198)	57% (66 of 115)	96% (46 of 48)	97% (34 of 35)

	Respondent indicated "If rated today, could meet standard"			
	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
CI-9. Assessment results are used to inform individual and group instruction	79% (164 of 207)	69% (86 of 125)	91% (43 of 47)	100% (35 of 35)
CI-10. Instructional assessment findings are shared with families	81% (166 of 206)	68% (85 of 125)	100% (46 of 46)	100% (35 of 35)
CI-11. National Accreditation acknowledged by state approved organization	29% (57 of 199)	14% (16 of 118)	55% (26 of 47)	44% (15 of 34)
CI-12. Maintain NAEYC staff-to-child- ratios and group size requirements	66% (137 of 209)	46% (58 of 127)	94% (45 of 48)	100% (34 of 34)

Compared to standards in Classroom Instruction and Quality, administrators from across operational models appeared to be more ready, overall, to meet standards in Staff Qualifications and Professional Development (Table 24). For example, 94% of all respondents reported that they were ready to meet standard PD-1. Program/Site Administrator/Director receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree.

Table 24 Administrator Feedback on Readiness to Meet Staff Qualifications and Professional Development Standards

	Respondent indicated "If rated today, could meet standard"			
	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
PD-1. Program/Site Administrator/Director receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree— REQUIRED to advance to a 2-star rating	94% (198 of 211)	92% (116 of 126)	94% (44 of 47)	100% (37 of 37)
PD-2. 50% of teaching staff receive 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree— REQUIRED to advance to a 2-star rating	87% (180 of 208)	77% (95 of 123)	100% (48 of 48)	100% (36 of 36)
PD-3. Program/Site Administrator achieves the Kentucky Director Credential OR holds an administrator certificate in a field not related to early childhood and the equivalent of 3 credit hours in child development or at least 5 years full-time related experience in early childhood field	81% (166 of 205)	76% (93 of 122)	85% (41 of 48)	91% (31 of 34)

	Respondent indicated “If rated today, could meet standard”			
	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
PD-4. 50% of teaching staff participate in professional learning activities related to curriculum-based assessment	86% (178 of 208)	79% (97 of 123)	92% (44 of 48)	100% (36 of 36)
PD-5. Program/Site Administrator achieves appropriate credential as outlined in the Kentucky Career Lattice.	73% (149 of 203)	66% (80 of 121)	80% (37 of 46)	89% (31 of 35)
PD-6. Teaching Staff complete appropriate credentials	75% (153 of 205)	59% (72 of 122)	98% (45 of 46)	100% (36 of 36)
PD-7. Individual PD Plan aligns with state identified professional core knowledge and competencies	87% (180 of 208)	83% (102 of 123)	88% (42 of 48)	100% (36 of 36)

In the domain Family and Community Engagement (Table 25), overall, administrators were ready to meet standard FC-3. Two-way communication with families—this appears to be a consistent aspect of practice across sites. Child care sites, however, appeared less ready than preschool and Head Start sites to meet a number of standards, including FC2 (Implement family engagement activities that promote children’s development and learning), FC4 (Implements transition supports for children and families) and FC5 (Share community resources with families).

Table 25 Administrator Feedback on Readiness to Meet Family and Community Engagement Standards

	Respondent indicated “If rated today, could meet standard”			
	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
FC-1. Program/Site Administrator and 75% of staff complete professional learning activities related to strengthening family engagement	79% (165 of 209)	71% (87 of 123)	83% (40 of 48)	100% (37 of 37)
FC-2. Implement family engagement activities that promote children’s development and learning	89% (180 of 202)	82% (97 of 119)	100% (46 of 46)	100% (36 of 36)
FC-3. Two-way communication with families	98% (202 of 206)	97% (118 of 122)	100% (48 of 48)	100% (35 of 35)
FC-4. Implements transition supports for children and families	83% (161 of 195)	70% (78 of 112)	100% (46 of 46)	100% (36 of 36)
FC-5. Share community resources with families	88% (173 of 197)	79% (90 of 114)	100% (46 of 46)	100% (36 of 36)
FC-6. Builds partnerships with community agencies	74% (151 of 205)	60% (72 of 120)	88% (42 of 48)	100% (36 of 36)

Finally, as regards Administrative and Leadership Practices (Table 26), the standard that administrators, overall, were most ready to meet was AL-3: Has a system for evaluating staff performance by monitoring and providing feedback for improvement. The standard that administrators were least ready to meet was AL-1: Administrator/ Director is a member of EC Professional Organization. The standard with the largest discrepancy between child care and preschool and Head Start sites was AL-7: Provide at least 11 Days Paid Time Off annually, Health Insurance, or Retirement. This again highlights the practical differences in operational model.

Table 26 Administrator Feedback on Readiness to Meet Administrative and Leadership Practices Standards

	Respondent indicated “If rated today, could meet standard”			
	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
AL-1. Administrator/ Director is a member of EC Professional Organization	72% (147 of 204)	64% (76 of 119)	81% (39 of 48)	86% (31 of 36)
AL-2. Teaching staff are provided weekly lesson planning time	84% (174 of 207)	77% (94 of 122)	90% (43 of 48)	100% (36 of 36)
AL-3. Has a system for evaluating staff performance by monitoring and providing feedback for improvement	88% (183 of 208)	80% (99 of 123)	100% (48 of 48)	97% (35 of 36)
AL-4. Implements a continuous improvement plan	79% (159 of 201)	67% (79 of 118)	96% (46 of 48)	97% (33 of 34)
AL-5. Seeks input from staff on the continuous improvement plan	78% (158 of 203)	66% (78 of 118)	92% (44 of 48)	97% (35 of 36)
AL-6. Seeks input from families annually on the implementation of the continuous improvement plan	78% (153 of 196)	64% (73 of 114)	96% (44 of 46)	100% (35 of 35)
AL-7. Provide at least 11 Days Paid Time Off annually, Health Insurance, or Retirement	78% (159 of 205)	62% (74 of 120)	100% (47 of 47)	100% (37 of 37)

Summary

This part of the report focuses on site ability to engage with All STARS and advance in star rating. As was shown, there are three operational models participating in All STARS: private child care sites (including Type 1, Type 2, certified, and family child care home providers); preschool programs (operated by local education authorities with oversight from Kentucky’s Department of Education); and Head Start sites (including sites that are “blended” with preschool or child care, or function as stand-alone sites). The nature of each operational model affects a site’s ability to move through the All STARS system. First, preschool and Head Start sites enter the system at a level 3—reflecting the additional standards and requirements preschool and Head Start sites are meeting (i.e., from education and federal sponsors). Second, the infrastructure available for preschool and Head Start sites may assist some of these sites in making quality gains; infrastructure may be a significant challenge for private sites (and especially smaller sites or sites that do not operate as a branch of a “chain”). Thus, it is possible for sites to have a

good understanding of and satisfaction with All STARS and yet be unable to advance in rating—in part due to cost constraints or lack of infrastructure.

One area in which the state can support sites in through coaching, technical assistance, and ongoing professional development. It will be important to consider whether each operational model has sufficient assistance or professional support available to it, and whether early education professionals have access to the supports they find the most valuable to their professional growth and development. Notably, time and cost appear to be significant challenges for professionals.

Part 3: Do All STARS' criteria, measurement, and rating procedures adequately and accurately differentiate child care or early education quality?

3a. How accurately and effectively do Kentucky All STARS levels differentiate the quality of programs?

The study team implemented observations of sampled classrooms at each participating site. Results are summarized below, by star rating and type of site. In reviewing these data, it is important to remember that to advance to level 3 or higher, sites need to first agree to participate in an onsite observation and then, at level 4 achieve a minimum score of 4 for each classroom and at level 5, achieve a minimum score of 5 for each classroom.

Generally speaking, the 5-star approach suggests that advancing from a rating of 1 star to 5 stars is an improvement in quality. Thus, a second feature to be aware of in reviewing findings is the overall progression of scores, from sites with lower ratings to higher ratings—do average scores increase with star rating?

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale—Revised (ECERS-R)

ECERS-R data were compiled from 300 classrooms in 153 participating sites. The ECERS-R contains seven subscales, which are presented in **Error! Reference**

source not found.: (1) Space and Furnishings; (2) Personal Care Routines; (3) Language and Literacy; (4) Learning Activities; (5) Interaction; (6) Program Structure; and (7)

The average ECERS-R score was 4.78.

Parents and Staff. Items in each subscale are rated on a seven-point scale, in which a score of 1 indicates “inadequate” and a score of 7 indicates “excellent.” For the current study, scores of 1 or 2 were considered “low” performing, scores of 3-5 were considered “moderate” performing, and scores of 6 or 7, “high” performing.

As can be seen in

Table 27, the progression of star rating aligns with ECERS-R overall scores, with one exception: overall rating in 4-star sites, which was lower than overall rating in 3-star or 5-star sites. This pattern in overall rating was consistent across sub-scales (with the exception of activities). It also is noteworthy that ratings for 2-star sites appear to dip (or be lower than ratings in 1-star sites) in the sub-scales language and literacy, interaction, and program structure. Overall, findings suggest that sites, on average, should be capable of meeting All STARS requirements to advance in rating (with minimum scores of 4 or 5 stars).

Table 27

Overall ECERS-R Scores in Observed Classrooms, by Star Rating

ECERS-R	Overall	Space & Furnishings	Personal Care Routines	Language & Literacy	Activities	Interaction	Program Structure	Parents & Staff
Overall	4.78	4.69	4.15	5.04	4.23	5.28	4.95	5.69
1 star	4.38	4.31	3.66	4.71	3.76	4.98	4.52	5.43
2 star	4.42	4.38	3.78	4.58	3.88	4.76	4.29	5.62
3 star	4.97	5.06	4.40	5.10	4.29	5.47	5.23	5.86
4 star	4.69	4.42	3.91	4.89	4.47	5.15	4.78	5.61
5 star	5.47	5.18	4.84	5.98	5.18	6.07	5.83	5.89
Missing rating (Head Start sites)	5.43	5.38	5.14	5.68	4.84	5.82	5.59	6.13

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale—Third Edition (ECERS-3)

ECERS-3 data were gathered from 78 classrooms in 50 sites (preschool and Head Start sites, rated as 3 or 5 stars). The ECERS-3 contains six subscales: (1) Space and Furnishings, (2) Personal Care Routines, (3) Language and Literacy, (4) Learning Activities, (5) Interaction, and (6) Program Structure. Items were scored and interpreted the same as with the ITERS-R.

The average ECERS-3 score was 5.76.

Overall, the mean ECERS-3 score for early childhood education classrooms (n=78) was 5.76 on a 7-point scale, as is shown in Table 28. Ratings in 5-star sites were higher than those in 3-star sites, both overall and in most sub-scales (noting the exception of Language & Literacy).

Table 28

Overall ECERS-3 Ratings in Observed Classrooms, by Star Rating

ECERS-3	Overall	Space & Furnishings	Personal Care Routines	Language & Literacy	Learning Activities	Interaction	Program Structure
Overall	5.76	5.69	5.67	5.92	5.52	6.14	6.00
3 star	5.52	5.18	5.68	5.97	5.19	6.05	5.95
5 star	5.85	5.88	5.67	5.91	5.64	6.23	6.01

Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale—Revised (ITERS-R)

ITERS-R data were compiled for 233 classrooms in 111 sites. The ITERS-R contains seven subscales: (1) Space and Furnishings, (2) Personal Care Routines, (3) Listening and Talking, (4) Activities, (5) Interaction, (6) Program Structure, and (7) Parents and Staff.

The average ITERS-R score was 4.47.

The mean ITERS-R score was 4.47 on a seven-point scale (Table 29). Of note, 4-star rated sites, overall, tend to have lower ratings than 3-star or 5-star programs. The same is true of 2-star sites in the sub-scales Interaction and Program Structure.

Table 29 Overall ITERS-R Ratings in Observed Classrooms, by Star Rating

	Overall	Space & Furnishings	Personal Care Routines	Listening & Talking	Activities	Interaction	Program Structure	Parents & Staff
Overall	4.47	4.45	3.87	4.64	3.70	5.32	4.49	5.39
1 star	4.31	4.22	3.67	4.48	3.50	5.23	4.42	5.27
2 star	4.34	4.25	3.94	4.62	3.52	5.13	3.93	5.31
3 star	4.76	4.95	4.22	4.63	3.96	5.43	4.89	5.76
4 star	4.38	4.42	3.34	4.46	3.79	5.39	4.30	5.35
5 star	5.30	5.53	5.19	5.71	4.38	6.09	6.00	5.47
Missing rating (Head Start sites)	6.22	6.17	5.44	6.89	5.94	6.83	6.68	6.43

School-Aged Classroom Environment Rating Scale (SACERS)

Finally, SACERS data were collected from 66 classrooms in 63 child care sites (one of which operated in an elementary school; Table 30). One SACERS observation reflected a sole 5-star site and is not included. There are seven sub-scales: (1) Space and Furnishings; (2) Healthy and Safety; (3) Activities; (4) Interactions; (5) Program Structure; (6) Staff Development; and (7) Exceptional Children. Overall, 4-star sites had lower ratings than 3-star sites (with the exception of subscales Staff Development and Exceptional Children). Similarly, 2-star sites were lower than 1-star sites in the subscale Exceptional Children.

The average SACERS score was 4.14.

Table 30 Overall SACERS Ratings in Observed Classrooms, by Star Rating

SACERS	Overall	Space & Furnishings	Health & Safety	Activities	Interactions	Program Structure	Staff Dev	Exceptional Children
Overall	4.14	3.79	4.33	3.45	4.67	3.82	5.52	3.61
1 star	3.82	3.35	4.00	3.06	4.38	3.67	5.65	3.33
2 star	4.14	3.78	4.62	3.35	4.58	3.74	5.63	3.26
3 star	4.81	4.53	4.71	4.24	5.35	5.17	5.83	4.00
4 star	4.27	4.19	4.25	3.89	4.94	3.07	4.63	4.83

Supports for Family Engagement

The Family Provider Teacher Relationship Quality Scale (FPTRQ) was developed to assess the strength and quality of parent-teacher engagement and relationships, with a focus on how well teachers facilitate meaningful relationships with families. Three versions of the FPTRQ were used in the study: Director, Teacher, and Parent.

Director Responses

The Director's version of the FPTRQ contains four subscales: Environment and Policy Checklist, Communication Systems, Information about Resources, and Referrals.

- The Environment and Policy Checklist captures concepts such as the welcoming nature of the site, the availability of culturally diverse information, and site strategies for providing parenting information. Seventeen items from the assessment are incorporated into this subscale, and the total possible range of scores is 0 to 17.
- The Communication Systems subscale addresses strategies for communicating with families. There are nine items in this subscale, and the total possible range of scores is 0 to 9.
- The Information about Resources subscale captures the nature of information made available to families. There are 12 items in this subscale, and the total possible range of scores is 0 to 12.
- There are five items contained in the Referrals scale, which addresses whether or not programs provide referrals for services such as health screenings or developmental assessments.

The mean scores identified during the instrument's development provide some guidance for interpreting the scores. To wit, the Environment and Policy Checklist mean score, representing center-based directors, was 13.2, with a range of responses from 6 to 17 (Kim et al., 2014). (No mean scores were reported for Communications Systems, Information about Resources, or Referrals). Thus, scores at or above 13.2 in the current study suggest family engagement and communication practices at or above "typical."

The mean Environment and Policy checklist score for the current study was 13.2 (the mean score reported by Kim et al., 2014; see Appendix F for more details), suggesting that, on average, participating directors were performing at a "typical" level, compared to the general sample of directors. The mean Communication Systems score was 7.9—no sample-based mean score was available, but it is worth noting that the total range for this subscale is 0 to 9 points. Thus, directors in the current study reported behaviors at the high end of the scale.

The mean score for Information about Resources was 5.5. While no mean sample score was available for comparison, this subscale has a range of 0 to 12 points. Thus, a mean score of 5.5 suggests that directors are, on average, not making a full or comprehensive bank of resources available for parent's information needs. Finally, the mean score on Referrals was 2.5, at the mid-point of the 5-point scale.

Table 31 presents average ratings for participating sites, as provided by directors who completed the questionnaire. The overall average score of Environment and Policy Checklists was 13.66 (on a scale

of 6 to 17), or in the “typical” range reported by Kim et.al., 2014. The average score for methods used to communicate with families was 8.03, on a scale of 0 to 9. The average score for Information about Resources was 4.67—on a scale of 0 to 12. Finally, the average score for Referrals was 2.72, or midpoint on a scale of 0 to 5.

Overall, scores were highest for Head Start sites. By sub-scale, Communication Systems scores were highest for preschool sites while Information about Resources and Referrals were highest for Head Start sites.

Table 31 FPTRQ Scale Scores for Directors in Participating Sites

	Environment and Policy Checklist	Communication Systems	Information about Resources	Referrals
Total	13.66	8.03	4.67	2.72
Child Care	12.36	7.68	3.13	2.01
Head Start	16.44	8.24	9.66	4.14
Preschool	14.73	8.77	5.68	3.67

Teacher Responses

Knowledge contains one element, which probes a teacher’s family-specific knowledge. There are 12 items within this element, with a possible range of 12 to 48. In the current study, the mean Knowledge subscale score was 31.97. It is worth noting that the mean score for center-based programs reported in the FPTRQ’s User’s Guide is 33.3.

Practices focuses on teacher interactions with families, with a possible range in scores of 23 to 92. This sub-scale consists of three constructs: Collaboration (15 items), Responsiveness (4 items), and Communication (4 items). Attitudes focuses on teacher beliefs and values and contains three sub-scales: Commitment (4 items), Openness to Change (8 items), and Respect (4 items). The possible range in score for Attitudes is 16 to 64.

The mean Practices score was 73.62 (while the mean sample-score reported in the User’s Guide is 77.6), again suggesting a lower, on average, level of practice by participating teachers. Finally, the mean Attitudes subscale score was 47.74 (the mean sample-score was 54.4).

Table 32 presents mean scores disaggregated by type of site. Teachers in Head Start and preschool programs tended to report higher levels of practice, compared to teachers in child care sites.

Table 32 FPTRQ Scale Scores for Teachers in Participating Sites

	Knowledge	Practices	Attitudes
Total	31.97	73.62	47.74
Child Care	31.29	72.12	47.55
Head Start	33.83	78.36	48.12
Preschool	33.16	75.54	48.16

Parent Responses

The Parent version of the FPTRQ contains three subscales: Knowledge, Practices, and Attitudes. The Knowledge sub-scale addresses a parent’s comfort level with sharing family-specific knowledge with a site. There are 15 items in this sub-scale, and total score ranges from 15 to 60. The Practices sub-scale addresses four constructs: Collaboration, Responsiveness, Communication, and Family-Focused Concern. There are 33 items in this subscale, and the total range of scores is 33 to 132. The Attitudes sub-scale addresses three constructs: Commitment, Understanding Context, and Respect. There are 18 items in this sub-scale, and the total range of scores is 18 to 72.

As with the teacher and director measures, mean scores for the sample that was used to develop the instrument are available to help interpret the findings. In the current study Table 33, the mean score for parents on the Knowledge subscale was 53.9 (compared to a mean sample score of 52.6, cited in the User’s Manual). The mean score for the Practices subscale was 111.41 (compared to a mean score of 109.4 cited in the User’s Manual), and the mean score for the Attitudes subscale was 45.4 (compared to a mean score of 67.7 cited in the User’s Manual). Thus, participating parents tended to report lower responses for “Attitudes” than the sample used to develop the tool.

Table 33 FPTRQ Scale Scores for Parents in Participating Sites

	Knowledge	Practices	Attitudes
Total	53.90	111.41	45.40
Child Care	53.78	109.62	45.15
Head Start	53.82	114.83	46.16
Preschool	54.23	112.77	45.34

Summary

- Classrooms in participating sites received observations using the Environment Rating Scales suite of assessments. These same classrooms completed questionnaires from the Family Provider Teacher Relationship Quality (FPTRQ) scale; parents and administrators also completed questionnaires from this series.
- In general, scores from observations tracked the progression of star ratings in that sites with higher star ratings also received higher observation scores. Overall ratings were relatively high (near, at, or above the median score of “4” on the seven-point scale). However, it is helpful to note that in some scales sites with 2-star ratings received scores that were lower than the 1-star and 3-star sites and some sites with 4-star ratings received scores that were lower than their 3-star and 5-star neighbors.
- The FPTRQ Scale captured director, teacher, and parent feedback on a number of issues related to the quality of family communications and engagement. While average scores on many of the constructs fell close to, at, or above the published mean, there may be opportunities to improve the quality of family engagement among both teachers and parents.

Part 4: Is there sufficient infrastructure to promote and support child care professionals and early education in their advance through All STARS?

4a. How effectively does Kentucky All STARS encourage advancement upward in the TQRIS through the non-monetary and monetary supports provided?

Participating administrators reported on the receipt and value of incentives and assistance for improving quality (Table 34). Overall, 70% of respondents reported receiving incentives or other assistance—which could include coaching, technical assistance, information, materials, or other resources. Of those respondents who received incentives, about half reported that the incentives helped “a great deal” for improving quality. Higher proportions of child care providers reported that incentives were instrumental for quality, compared to respondents from preschool and Head Start programs.

Table 34 Administrator Feedback on the Value of Financial and Other Incentives

	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
Administrator reports receiving incentives or assistance for improving classroom quality and site star rating	70% (159 of 227)	70% (99 of 141)	61% (30 of 49)	81% (30 of 37)
Of those who reported receiving incentives, the types of support that were received:				
Non-monetary in the form of coaching and technical assistance	76% (121 of 159)	72% (71 of 99)	83% (25 of 30)	83% (25 of 30)
Monetary in the form of vouchers to use at Lakeshore Learning	78% (100 of 129)	80% (79 of 99)	<i>Preschool sites do not receive financial incentives</i>	70% (21 of 30)
Non-monetary in the form of information, materials, or resources	64% (102 of 159)	66% (65 of 99)	70% (21 of 30)	53% (16 of 30)
Of those who received incentives, administrator reported that incentives helped a “great deal—I could not have improved quality without this”				
Monetary in the form of vouchers to use at Lakeshore Learning	54% (52 of 97)	61% (47 of 77)	<i>Preschool sites do not receive financial incentives</i>	25% (5 of 20)
Non-monetary in the form of coaching and technical assistance	49% (57 of 117)	58% (39 of 67)	52% (13 of 25)	20% (5 of 25)
Non-monetary in the form of information, materials, or resources	49% (48 of 98)	57% (35 of 61)	33% (7 of 21)	38% (6 of 16)

Information about the affordability of site and classroom improvements was presented in Part 2 of the findings, as was information about the accessibility and importance of professional supports overall as well as barriers to improving quality at participating sites. It also may be helpful to review information captured from the universal survey, which was available to professionals from across the state, and also captured information on barriers or challenges for improving quality.

Table 35 contains items that were rated by administrators as being “extremely difficult” or “difficult” for improving quality. Items were grouped into several categories: Staffing, Paperwork, Processes for Making Improvements, Costs of Making Improvements, and Working with Parents. The challenges most often cited by administrators as being extremely difficult or difficult were (a) finding and hiring qualified staff and (b) expense related to improvements. The infrastructure most related to these challenges includes:

- Supports for professionals to continue or complete their education, including accessible coursework and scholarships,
- Financial supports, including tiered subsidy reimbursements and scholarships for children, and
- High-quality materials and resources that can be used at sites and classrooms.

Table 35 Administrator Feedback on Challenges for Improving Quality

	Extremely Difficult or Difficult
Staffing	
Finding and hiring qualified staff	58% (220 of 378)
Retaining qualified staff	34% (129 of 376)
Paperwork	
Amount of All STARS paperwork needing attention or completion	25% (96 of 377)
Complexity of All STARS paperwork	23% (86 of 377)
Collecting documentation to submit to All STARS	23% (86 of 375)
Figuring out how to submit documentation to All STARS	17% (65 of 379)
Processes for Making Improvements	
Working across different regulatory requirements	31% (118 of 377)
Finding time to mentor staff	31% (117 of 375)
Finding time to meet with/help your staff make improvements	30% (114 of 378)
Finding time to attend trainings or professional development	30% (115 of 379)
Finding time to receive mentoring from peers or coaches	24% (90 of 376)
Motivating or getting your staff to make improvements	19% (70 of 378)
Finding time to meet with coaches or technical assistance providers	19% (72 of 379)

	Extremely Difficult or Difficult
Understanding All STARS requirements	17% (66 of 378)
Costs of Making Improvements	
Expense related to improvements	54% (202 of 376)
Working with Parents	
Talking with parents about All STARS	12% (44 of 376)
Talking with parents about their (and their child's or children's) needs	7% (25 of 379)

Teachers also participated in the universal survey; their feedback on challenges for improving quality is shown in Table 36. The challenge most often cited by teacher related to the expense of going back to school or completing coursework, underscoring the importance of scholarships or other education supports.

Table 36 Teacher Feedback on Challenges for Improving Quality

	Extremely Difficult or Difficult
Education	
Expense of going back to school or complete coursework	65% (149 of 228)
Finding time to go back to school or complete coursework	44% (101 of 228)
Processes for Making Improvements	
Finding time to make improvements	33% (76 of 228)
Working across different regulatory requirements for my classroom	33% (76 of 228)
Finding time to meet with mentor, coach, or technical assistance provider	29% (67 of 228)
Finding time to attend trainings or professional development	25% (58 of 229)
Collecting All STARS documentation	21% (47 of 225)
Understanding how All STARS requirements apply to my classroom	15% (34 of 228)
Getting support or leadership from my director or administrator	10% (22 of 226)

	Extremely Difficult or Difficult
Getting motivated to make improvements	7% (17 of 228)
Cost of Making Improvements	
Personal expense related to improvements (if applicable)	47% (107 of 228)
Working with Parents	
Talking with parents about All STARS	12% (27 of 226)
Talking with parents about their (and their child's or children's) needs	4% (9 of 228)

Serving Vulnerable Populations

The study provided an opportunity to also address several topics of interest regarding highly vulnerable populations. First, the study team incorporated questions about vulnerable populations into its universal survey. Second, for those sites that participated in observations, the study team used the SpecialLink to examine classroom and site practices for working with children with special or developmental needs.

Findings from Universal Survey of Early Childhood Professionals

Respondents to the universal survey were asked to report on children they served who they considered to have high Adverse Childhood Experiences scores (scores of 2 or higher). As can be seen in Table 37, 73% of respondents reported working with children that have ACES of 2 or higher. On average, respondents reported that seven children in their classrooms had high ACES.

Adverse Childhood Experiences Score (ACES)

For the study, ACES were defined using guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC; <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>) as the abuse, household challenges, and neglect that may occur and have harmful effects in a person's first 18 years of life. ACES indicators can include parent mental health issues, parent substance abuse issues, parent incarcerations, parents who are separated or divorced, violence within the home, sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, and emotional and physical neglect (cf: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html>). Highly vulnerable children may have a high number of

Table 37

Universal Survey Respondent Feedback on Serving Children with High ACES

	Percent/Number of respondents working with children with 2+ Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)	Average number of children with 2+ ACES scores in site or classroom
Overall	72.5% (421)	7
Child Care	62.3% (185)	6
Preschool	86.4% (153)	10
Head Start	77.9% (67)	7

Despite the prevalence of children with ACES, many early education professionals may not have formal professional development or training specific to ACES (Table 38). Overall, over half of respondents (57.5%) reported no formal training, with higher proportions of respondents in child care programs reporting an absence of formal training.

Table 38

Universal Survey Respondent Feedback on Training Specific to ACES

	No formal professional development or training on ACES
Overall	57.5% (334)
Child Care	65.7% (195)
Preschool	53.7% (95)
Head Start	38.4% (33)

As can be seen in Table 39, the reasons professionals have not received formal training in ACES tended to be that the professional was “just learning about ACES,” or that this was new information. Note as well, however, that some professionals also reported an absence of training or professional development opportunities on this topic, at locations convenient to them. Notably, very few respondents reported that working with children with high ACES was outside of their professional responsibilities.

Table 39
for ACES

Universal Survey Respondent Feedback on Absence of Training or Development

	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
I am just learning about ACES/ this is new information for me	31.8% (185)	40.7% (121)	26.6% (47)	16.3% (14)
There hasn't been a training or professional development opportunity near me	20.0% (116)	19.9% (59)	20.9% (37)	18.6% (16)
I don't have the technology to access online events	1.2% (7)	2.4% (7)	--	--
I can't afford to attend a training or professional development event	4.1% (24)	5.7% (17)	3.4% (6)	1.2% (1)
This is not yet a priority at my site or school	5.9% (34)	5.7% (17)	6.2% (11)	4.7% (4)
I have not had the time or interest	1.4% (8)	2.0% (6)	1.1% (2)	--
I don't believe this is my role as an early educator or teacher	0.9% (5)	1.0% (3)	0.6% (1)	1.2% (1)
Other	5.9% (34)	6.4% (19)	5.1% (9)	4.7% (4)

Despite the lack of formal training, as shown in Table 40, many respondents reported having either numerous or a good range of skills and tools for working with children to:

- Build positive relationships (77% of respondents),
- Build social skills (75%), and
- Cope with difficult behaviors or challenging feelings or emotions (62%).

Table 40

Universal Survey Respondent Feedback on Skills and Tools

Extent to which staff believe they have the skills & tools needed to work with children:	Respondent reported either numerous or a good range of skills and tools
...to build their social skills.	75.3% (394)
...struggling with difficult behaviors or challenging feelings or emotions.	61.8% (322)
...to build positive relationships.	76.6% (400)

Table 41 presents additional information on the strategies that professionals use frequently or extensively, to work with children who have high ACES. The most popular strategy was to give parents referrals to Family Resource and Youth Services Centers (33% of respondents), followed by giving parents referrals to social or human services programs in the community (28% of respondents). Ten percent of respondents reported using Strengthening Families: A Protective Factors Framework.

Table 41 Universal Survey Respondent Feedback on Strategies for Working with Children with High ACES

	Use frequently or extensively
I give parents referrals to or partner with Family Resource and Youth Services Centers.	32.9% (171)
I give parents referrals to social or human services programs in the community.	28.3% (147)
I give parents referrals to other parent support or education programs.	24.4% (126)
Other referrals	23.9% (116)
I collaborate with on-site/agency parent support specialists or case managers.	20.1% (104)
I give parents referrals to Born Learning Academies.	19.7% (102)
I participate in training or professional development on trauma-informed (or related) practices.	13.5% (70)
Trauma-informed practices	12.2% (62)
Another socio-emotional framework (for example, the Pyramid Model or the CASEL model)	10.3% (53)
Strengthening Families: A Protective Factors Framework.	10.2% (53)

Working with children with high ACES may create additional stress for professionals, especially when professionals do not believe they have the training or resources that they need. Universal survey respondents also were asked to report on their own overall levels of fatigue and enthusiasm; findings are presented in Table 42. While about a quarter of respondents reported occasional fatigue, very few reported occasional feelings of indifference towards their students. It was more common for professionals to feel a sense of accomplishment from their work, as well as enthusiasm or excitement for their work. However, it also is important to note that, overall, about a quarter of respondents reported occasional feelings of stress or anxiety about their work. A smaller proportion reported occasional feelings of “burnout”—but this was more common among professionals in child care sites.

Table 42 Universal Survey Respondent Feedback on Occasionally or Sometimes Feeling Fatigue or Enthusiasm

Educators currently experiencing:	Overall	Child Care	Preschool	Head Start
A sense of fatigue or exhaustion	24.1% (125)	26.2% (71)	23.0% (35)	18.2% (14)
Feelings of indifference towards or distance from your students	1.5% (8)	1.8% (5)	1.3% (2)	1.3% (1)
A sense of accomplishment from your work	55.1% (286)	56.3% (152)	54.6% (83)	52.6% (41)
A sense of burnout from the demands of your work	17.1% (89)	19.2% (52)	16.6% (25)	8.9% (7)
A sense of stress or anxiety about your work	24.6% (128)	26.1% (71)	26.5% (40)	13.9% (11)
A sense of enthusiasm or excitement about your work	59.7% (310)	56.3% (152)	62.3% (94)	64.6% (51)

Specialink Early Childhood Inclusion Quality Scale

The Specialink Early Childhood Inclusion Quality Scale is comprised on two parts: Practices and Principles. **Practices** contain items that target how well teachers, parents, and other professionals work together to support children, which include:

1. Physical environment and special needs,
2. Equipment and materials,
3. Director and inclusion,
4. Staff support,
5. Staff training,
6. Therapies: physiotherapy (PT); occupational therapy (OT); speech & language (S&L); behavioral consultation,
7. Individual program plans (IPPs),
8. Parents of children with special needs,
9. Involvement of typical children,
10. Board of directors and other similar units, and
11. Preparing for transition to school

Principles contains items that focus on values and beliefs regarding inclusion:

1. Zero reject,
2. Naturally occurring proportions,
3. Same hours of attendance available to all children,
4. Full participation,
5. Maximum feasible parent participation, and
6. Pro-active strategies and advocacy for high quality, *inclusive* child care.

Data are collected via observation and interviews at participating sites. Each item is scored on a seven-point scale.

The SpecialLink was completed in 190 classrooms in 117 sites; findings are presented in Table 43 and Table 44. As is shown in Table 43, 1-star, 2-star, and 4-star sites scored lowest on the scale, while 3-star and 5-star sites scored highest. Further, sites tended to score higher on Principles than on Practices, which may reflect practical challenges of implementing fully inclusive classrooms.

Table 43 Overall SpecialLink Ratings for Participating Sites, by Star Rating

	Overall	Average Practices	Average Principles
Overall	4.88	4.75	5.12
1 star	3.18	2.67	4.44
2 star	3.02	3.38	3.38
3 star	4.88	4.42	5.51
4 star	3.10	3.57	3.86
5 star	5.56	5.10	6.56
Missing (Head Start sites)	5.40	3.91	6.62

Findings by operational model are presented in Table 44. Preschool and Head Start programs, on average, outperformed child care sites. This may reflect the connection of preschool programs to early intervention professionals and services within the state.

Table 44 Overall SpecialLink Ratings for Participating Sites, by Operational Model

	Overall	Average Practices	Average Principles
Overall	4.88	4.75	5.12
Child Care	3.43	3.24	3.78
Preschool	5.53	5.47	5.64
Head Start	5.32	5.15	5.65

Summary

- Infrastructure refers to the state staff and systems that are in place to assist, guide, and support quality improvements.
- Existing All STARS infrastructure includes administrative staff at the Division of Child Care, Kentucky's Governors Office of Early Childhood, and Kentucky's Department of Education. Infrastructure also includes staff in each branch that provide technical assistance and coaching and

rating staff who complete on-site observations. Finally, infrastructure includes financial and tangible resources such as tiered subsidy reimbursements, materials, and scholarships for early education professionals. This study's results suggest that this range of supports is necessary to advance in quality or to maintain a high level of quality. Thus it may be helpful to consider how existing levels of support may need to grow or deepen, to help more sites advance in rating over time.

- It also may be fruitful to examine state supports for serving highly vulnerable children and especially so, children served in private child care sites. While preschool programs benefit from a close working relationship with early intervention services and professionals, child care sites may benefit from additional outreach and professional development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The validation study of Kentucky's All STARS Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System (TQRIS) was designed to respond to four questions:

- 1) Does All STARS capture concepts and indicators of quality that resonate with stakeholders?,
- 2) To what extent are child care/early education sites of different types, locations, etc. engaging in All STARS?,
- 3) Do All STARS' criteria, measurement, and rating procedures adequately and accurately differentiate child care or early education quality?, and
- 4) Is there sufficient infrastructure to promote and support child care professionals and early education in their advance through All STARS?

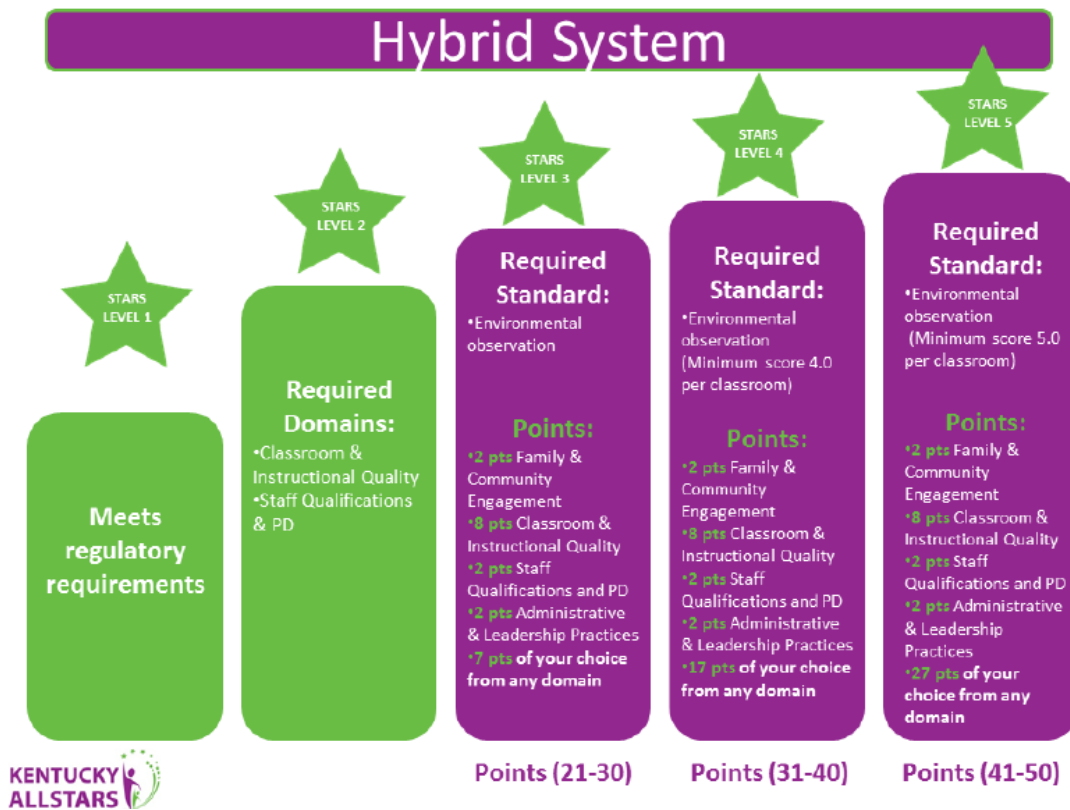
As regards the face validity of All STARS (question 1), study findings affirm that many stakeholders within Kentucky find the All STARS standards to be meaningful indicators of high-quality early learning environments. Of note, however, the lowest rated indicators referred to the educational attainment of teachers and administrators. Further, parents don't appear to be connecting All STARS rating with quality. One take-away may be the need for additional outreach and education regarding the All STARS standards and their connection to quality—many of the indicators that parents note were important for assessing quality also are indicators All STARS was designed to promote and support.

As regards advancement in All STARS, it is important to note that there are three operational models in the All STARS system: child care, preschool programs, and Head Start sites. Child care includes Type 1 and Type 2 licensed sites as well as certified or family child care home providers. Head Start sites may be blended with child care or preschool programs or functioning as stand-alone programs. In addition to responding to All STARS standards, child care sites must also comply with state licensing requirements. Preschool programs must comply with Kentucky Department of Education requirements while Head Start programs must comply with federal rules and performance requirements. Thus, there are three approaches within a unified system for quality within the state. This affects the ability of sites to enter and advance in star rating—child care sites enter at star level 1 while preschool programs and Head Start sites enter at star level 3. In addition, the support and services for the three models varies—with the Department of Education providing professional supports for preschool programs, the Division of Child Care providing professional and financial supports for child care sites, and Head Start sites receiving support through the Head Start network. It is not surprising therefore that different types of sites may require different types of support to advance in rating. There are several common needs, however, which focus on the challenges of finding, hiring, and retaining qualified staff and the cost and time involved for early education professionals to continue their education. The existence of the different operational models also creates an opportunity to leverage expertise and professional supports across models, to encourage greater consistency in implementing All STARS and its resulting quality improvements.

In general, the study's independent observations of quality track with progression in star rating. This means that 1- and 2-star sites typically received lower ratings than 3-, 4-, and 5-star sites. However, it is worth noting that there were several "dips" in observed quality for 4-star and, occasionally, 2-star sites. This may reflect an under-estimation of quality at the 1- and 3-star levels. This is to say, sites currently holding 1- and 3-star ratings may be providing higher quality care than their star level suggests. These are sites that potentially could have higher star ratings but may be deciding not to advance; reasons for not advancing may include procedural or financial challenges.

This study also was an opportunity to examine Kentucky's infrastructure for quality, which will be important for maintaining the gains already experienced in quality environments as well as assisting additional sites in advancing their rating in the future. Infrastructure includes the staffing, financial, and material supports available for sites to draw upon as they hire, train, and retain qualified staff, improve the daily classroom experiences of children, and form meaningful relationships with families and communities. Infrastructure also will be important for supporting highly vulnerable children who are served at early learning sites. Preschool programs benefit from their strong relationship with the system for early intervention; there may be opportunities to broaden and deepen supports for inclusion among child care sites as well. Finally, there may be opportunities to examine new strategies for responding to the needs of other vulnerable children and in particular, children with high Adverse Childhood Experiences scores. Many professionals reported serving vulnerable children within their classrooms. These professionals also reported a need to learn more about vulnerable children and best practices for responding to the needs of this population.

Appendix A: All STARS Criteria





Kentucky All STARS Standards of Quality

Domain	Max Points	Standard
Family and Community Engagement (10 points)	2 Points	Program/site administrator and 75% of staff complete professional learning activities related to strengthening family engagement.
	2 Points	Implement family engagement activities that promote children's development and learning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement at least one family engagement activity per year that promotes children's development and learning. Implement at least three family engagement activities per year that promote children's development and learning.
	2 Points	Two-way communication with families.
	2 Points	Implements transition supports for children and families.
	1 Point	Share community resources with families.
	1 Point	Builds partnerships with community agencies.
	Required	50% of teaching staff have professional learning activities in developmental screening.
	2 points	Ensure developmental screening within 90 days of enrollment and referral (if needed) within 30 days of screening for all enrolled children.
Classroom and Instructional Quality (20 points)	Required	Complete an environmental self-assessment using a valid and reliable tool appropriate for the ages/settings of children served.
	2 points	Implements curriculum that aligns with Kentucky Early Learning Standards (KVEL).
	1 point	Implements specialized supplemental curricula.
	2 points	KY Early Learning Standards are incorporated into lesson plans.
	2 points	Staff support IFSP/IEP goals of individual children.
	2 points	Staff conduct ongoing curriculum-based assessment to inform instruction.
	2 points	Assessment results are used to inform individual and group instruction.
	2 points	Instructional assessment findings are shared with families.
	Required	Participate in an environmental observation on a valid and reliable tool: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No minimum at Level 3 Minimum of 4.0 per classroom at Level 4 Minimum of 5.0 per classroom at Level 5
	1 point	National Accreditation acknowledged by state approved organization.
	4 points	Maintain NAEYC staff-to-child ratios and group size requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets for infants Meets for Toddlers Meets for Preschoolers

Staff Qualifications and PD 10 points)	Required	Program/site Administrator/director receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree.
	Required	50% of teaching staff receive 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree.
	1 point	50% of teaching staff participate in professional learning activities related to curriculum-based assessment.
	1 point	Program/Site Administrator achieves the Kentucky Director Credential OR holds an administrator certificate in a field not related to early childhood and the equivalent of 3 credit hours in child development or at least 5 years full time related experience in early childhood field.
	3 points	Program/Site Administrator achieves appropriate Credential as outlined on the Kentucky Career Lattice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2 or above on the Kentucky Career Lattice • Level 3 or above on the Kentucky Career Lattice • Level 4 or above on the Kentucky Career Lattice
	4 points	Teaching staff complete appropriate credentials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% achieve Level 1 or above on the Kentucky Career Lattice • 40% achieve Level 2 or above on the Kentucky Career Lattice • 30% achieve Level 3 or above on the Kentucky Career Lattice • 20% achieve Level 4 or above on the Kentucky Career Lattice
Administrative and Leadership Practices (10 points)	1 point	Individual PD plan aligns with state identified professional core knowledge and competencies.
	1 point	Administrator/Director is a member of EC Professional organization.
	2 points	Teaching staff are provided weekly lesson planning time.
	2 points	Has a system for evaluating staff performance by monitoring and providing feedback for improvement.
	2 points	Implements a continuous improvement plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks input from staff on the continuous improvement plan. • Seeks input from families annually on implementation of the continuous improvement plan
	3 points	Provide at least 11 days Paid Time Off Annually 1 point; Health Insurance 1 point; Retirement 1 point

Appendix B

Table 45 Population of Early Childhood Sites by Star Rating and Congressional District

Congressional District	<u>PRESCHOOL</u>						<u>HEAD START</u>						<u>CHILD CARE</u>						Total
	Star 1	Star 2	Star 3	Star 4	Star 5	M	Star 1	Star 2	Star 3	Star 4	Star 5	M	Star 1	Star 2	Star 3	Star 4	Star 5	M	
First	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	13	7	5	3	1	0	41
Second	0	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	19	5	8	3	1	0	59
Third	0	0	8	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	29	10	7	2	0	0	61
Fourth	0	0	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	3	6	14	7	4	9	4	0	53
Fifth	0	0	1	0	6	0	0	0	1	0	3	11	3	4	1	2	0	0	32
Sixth	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	26	17	6	6	4	0	67
Grand Total	0	0	14	0	36	0	0	0	3	0	14	26	104	50	31	25	10	0	313

